DAVID GASCOYNE

From Darkness into Light:

A study of his poetry 1932-1950

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to show Gascoyne's development from precocious theorist and practitioner of Surrealism into a religious poet of major significance.

Chapter 1 examines *Roman Balcony and other poems* (1932) influenced by Imagism and T.S. Eliot, and characterized by accurate observation and a delicate precision. **Chapter 2** engages with Surrealism and *Man's Life is this Meat* (1936), where Gascoyne employs imagery of a distinctive and potent visuality projected from an anguished inner landscape and coloured by a growing horror at the international political situation. **Chapter 3,** *Hölderlin's Madness* (1938), reflects his dissatisfaction with Surrealism, the impact of his discovery of Pierre Jean Jouve and Benjamin Fondane, marking a turning point in his personal philosophy and his quest for a new direction and poetic voice. His empathic versions of Hölderlin and the four interpolated poems of his own present an isolated protagonist, both visionary and victim. *Poems 1937-42* (1943), the focus of **Chapter 4,** reveals the tangible intensity of feeling of the previous collection, together with a deep interest in existential philosophy. A new religious quality emerges from his conscious desire to articulate a coherent vision of mankind's present spiritual crisis. **Chapter 5** is concerned with *A Vagrant and other poems* (1950). Both poet and circumstances had changed. He may be disillusioned with the mediocrity of the post-war years, and the former prodigious creativity and facility with language have left him, but this collection represents a further stage in a developing vision. There is a readiness to experiment, and a loosening of emotional tension in his acknowledgement of human fallibility.

The first of three **Appendices** offers a detailed chronology of Gascoyne's life and work, the second the genesis of *Poems 1937-42* with drafts of poems, and the third provides an extensive bibliography.

To the memory of

David Emery Gascoyne (1916-2001)

Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted to Alan Clodd, one of the kindest of men who, with typical generosity, made a point of photocopying for me every Gascoyne document, complete notebooks, letters, unpublished and uncollected poems and essays, in his possession. His friendship and constant encouragement have meant more than I can say.

I am particularly grateful to Stephen Stuart-Smith who took over the Enitharmon Press from Alan Clodd after 1987. Thanks to him, I have been involved in editing and publishing Gascoyne's work since 1994. Stephen's friendship, help, gentle guidance and sympathetic understanding have been invaluable throughout our engagement in the long-term project, publishing new and uncollected/out of print work by Gascoyne.

David and Judy Gascoyne, so kind and hospitable, became close friends from 1993 continuing to support and encourage me by letter and telephone. The gratitude David expressed on several occasions for my discoveries and the publications was heart-warming.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to my supervisors, Professor Allan Ingram and Dr Malcolm Gee, friends and colleagues, who have throughout provided all the encouragement and advice one could wish for, and more. Most of all, they have given me the self-belief to complete the project.

Michel Rémy, together with Kathleen Raine and Michael Hamburger, poets both, have also become much valued friends, so helpful and warmly supportive of my research, generously sharing with me the experience of their friendship of many years with Gascoyne and their familiarity with his work.

I have benefited greatly from access to Gascoyne's notebooks and papers in the British Library Manuscript Department where Sally Brown and Chris Fletcher could not have been more helpful or more interested in the project.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to Mark and Katie: both have shown genuine interest in my research and such a trusting belief in their father's ability, while Mark has demonstrated his technical expertise and flair in formatting. My wife, Pat, whose constant support and encouragement over the past nine years, together with her proof-reading skills, have meant so much, has made invaluable suggestions.

'But alas! Our generation walks in night, dwells as in Hades, without the Divine'.

Hölderlin: the epigraph to Gascoyne's ***Night Thoughts***

'Only a god can save us now. We can only through thinking and writing prepare to be prepared for the manifestation of God, or for the absence of God as things go downhill all the way'.

Martin Heidegger, interviewed in *Der Spiegel*, 1976

'The spirit that flickers and hurts in humanity
Shines brighter from better lamps; but from all shines.
Look to it: prepare for the long winter: spring is far off.'

Robinson Jeffers, from ***Selected Poems***

'Certain writers and poets manage to remain "balanced" by separating their high spiritual thought or the exploration of the depths from their lives – they do not Surrealistically synthesise the dark and the light, the man and the poet, but remain sane by dichotomy. Certain writers and poets like Blake – and Gascoyne refuse this escape'.

Brian Merrikin-Hill, 'The Transparent Mirror'

'In chthonic labyrinth where we now stray
Do Thou in us make peace, O Lightbringer.
Submerged in darkness glows the serene day'.

David Gascoyne: from 'Variations on a Phrase' (1982)

Declaration of Originality

The author wishes to certify that this thesis is the work of the candidate alone, and it has not been submitted for any other award.

Contents

Publications

1996 *maggie o'sullivan, david gascoyne, barry macsweeney.* Includes a selection of unpublished/uncollected poems/translations by Gascoyne (1932-1994), edited by **Roger Scott** & Nicholas Johnson, with notes by **Roger Scott** (etruscan books reader no.III), pp.17-32.

1996 ***'The Fire of Vision': David Gascoyne's 'Farewell Chorus' to George Barker,*** edited with an introductory essay by **Roger Scott** (Tragara Press for Enitharmon Press), pp.5-21.

1996 ***David Gascoyne: Selected Verse Translations***, with an introductory essay by **Roger Scott** (Enitharmon Press), pp.xv-xxii.

1997 ***maggie o'sullivan, david gascoyne, barry macsweeney.*** An extended selection, with additional poems/translations (etruscan books, reader III), pp.43-68.

1998 **David Gascoyne:** ***Encounter with Silence, Poems 1950***, edited by **Roger Scott** with an introduction, in *Temenos Academy Review*, new series 1, (spring), pp.46-62.

1998 Translations from the Spanish of Federico García Lorca's *Suites*: 'Three Poems of Nightfall' and 'Suite', with an introduction by **Roger Scott**, in *Modern Poetry in Translation*, new series 13 (spring), pp.171-176.

1998 **David Gascoyne:** ***Encounter with Silence, Poems 1950***, edited by **Roger Scott** with an introduction (Enitharmon Press), pp.5-30.

1998 **David Gascoyne:** ***Selected Prose 1934-1996***, edited with a preface by **Roger Scott** (Enitharmon Press), pp.5-462.

2000 'David Gascoyne's *Night Thoughts*: the infernal Megalometropolis' published in ***The City as Text/Lecture(s) de la Ville***, edited by Gilbert Bonifas (University of Nice), pp.51-63.

2000 **David Gascoyne:** ***April***, a novella (1937), edited with an introductory essay by **Roger Scott**, together with a preface to the Appendix (Enitharmon Press), pp.3-125.

2001 **David Gascoyne:** *The entrance to that valley*, first publication in pamphlet of a poem from c.1936 for his 85th birthday, with a brief note by **Roger Scott** (Enitharmon Press).

Forthcoming (2004):

Roger Scott: entry on '*Roger Roughton*' for the *New Dictionary of National Biography*.

Conference Papers

1995 'The Rites of Hysteria: David Gascoyne and Conroy Maddox', delivered at the colloquium *Surrealist Visuality* at the University of Keele.

1997 '"Paroxysms of vision" in 1930s poetry. David Gascoyne and Kenneth Allott: two kinds of Surrealism', given at the national conference, *The Literature of the 1930s:visions and revisions*, at Anglia Polytechnic University, Cambridge.

1999 'David Gascoyne's *Night Thoughts:* the infernal Megalometropolis', given at the colloquium in Newcastle upon Tyne, *The City as Text/Lecture(s) de la Ville*, organized jointly by the Research Group in European Urban Culture, University of Northumbria, and the Centre de Recherche sur les Ecritures de Langue Anglaise, University of Nice.

Introduction

The poet and critic, Peter Levi, has written that 'It is still impossible for me to recall certain lines by Auden without a physical excitement,' and he goes on to quote an example: 'O Love, the interest itself in thoughtless heaven [...]'[1] The spark which ignited the thrust of my research emanates from the frisson of my first encounter with David Gascoyne's poetry in the form of lines from his poem 'Tenebrae'[2]:

> The granite organ in the crypt
> Resounds with rising thunder through the blood,
> With daylight song, unearthly song that floods
> The brain with bursting suns:
> Yet it is night

which still resonate rhythmically down all the years since my days in the Lower Sixth at grammar school. Trying to get to grips with an essay on diction in modern English poetry, my reading had brought me with a marked degree of excitement to a discovery of poems by the Auden of *Look, Stranger!*, George Barker (and the line, 'Heads bounce down stone steps'), Dylan Thomas and Gascoyne. It was to Gascoyne that I returned most frequently at university and afterwards, collecting first editions of his work and literary magazines with his contributions. Many years later we became friends, exchanging letters and telephone calls, and I visited the Isle of Wight on several occasions. He asked me to edit for publication several poems and a novella, long-forgotten works which I had found in notebooks in the British Library and New York Public Library.

I have commented elsewhere on Gascoyne, Barker and Thomas in the context of thirties poetry.[3] Here is a cultural terrain which the prevailing critical concensus by and large still tends to characterize as the province of "the Auden generation". There were arguably three generations of poets writing during the decade. Gascoyne, Barker and Thomas belonged in their precocious and prodigious productivity to the youngest. Gascoyne has written of 'feeling a great gap', between his own work and that of Auden and his circle in the thirties, while acknowledging that 'the *New Country* poets of the

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1 *The Noise Made by Poems* (London: Anvil Press 1977, 1984), p.53.
2 ***Hölderlin's Madness*** (London: J.M. Dent, 1938*)*.
3 Introductory essay, ***The Fire of Vision: David Gascoyne and George Barker***, edited and introduced by Roger Scott (Tragara Press for Enitharmon Press, 1996), pp.5-21.

generation before mine were exciting because of their awareness of society's urgent need of drastic change, their expression of a longing for "new styles of architecture, a change of heart"'.[4]

At the outset, there was the spur of researching a body of work about which there is no book-length study in English,[5] and a strongly felt need to try to redress the critical balance and recuperate a writer who has been unjustly marginalized.

The central concern of the original MPhil programme was to examine Gascoyne's poetry and the way it intersected with Surrealism, the avant-garde connection allied to the 1930s context. However, a re-framing rapidly became necessary as my perceptions changed. Gascoyne's involvement with Surrealism was a necessary but brief journey of liberation. Other areas and issues rapidly assumed centrality in what became the PhD programme, not least my growing awareness of the significance of specific texts: ***Roman Balcony and other poems***; ***Hölderlin's Madness***; the ***Collected Journals 1936-42*** as a major document both for research and, more broadly, in terms of the map of twentieth century literature and cultural history; ***Poems 1937-42*** and the need to investigate the context and genesis of its production. There was, too, the shift in his poetry after the crucial encounter in 1937 with the work of Pierre Jean Jouve, and the engagement with existential philosophy.

There were additional complications: my discoveries of unpublished and uncollected material, and of hitherto unknown factors, such as periods of 'writer's block' and the three mental breakdowns, with the crippling effect on creativity. My involvement in editing and publishing texts by Gascoyne, in writing and delivering conference papers, together with teaching in the university, has clearly slowed down the enterprise, even brought it to suspension for a year. However, the extended period has afforded greater knowledge, understanding and insight, as well as providing the vital opportunity to stand back from total immersion in the research to retain a balanced view.

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4 'Afterword' to ***Collected Journals 1936-42*** (London: Skoob Books, 1991), p.391.

5 There is the monograph by Professor Michel Rémy, *David Gascoyne, ou l'urgence de l'inexprimé* (Presses Universitaires de Nancy 1984), but there is no English translation. Rémy is also the acknowledged expert on British Surrealism.

To reflect the changed focus, the original title of my study of the poetry, *'in the context of British Surrealism, and After*, was altered to *'From Darkness into Light'*. 'Darkness' is represented in: Gascoyne's mental state described with excoriating honesty in the ***Collected Journals***; in the notion of *la bouche d'ombre*, the Orphic voice;[6] in the inescapable awareness of the Void; in his characterization of the *Zeitgeist* in the late 1930s as 'The time of the Open Tomb'. 'Light', or the search for it, is present in the brightness and warmth of the sun (even at midnight); in the visionary quality so prominent in a number of poems; above all in his articulation of the need for man to acknowledge his lack of faith and to embrace the spiritual.

'From Darkness into Light' signifies for Gascoyne an on-going, an incomplete journey, but one that mankind must make. Like Hölderlin, he saw his, and successive generations, 'walk[ing] in Night, dwell[ing] as in Hades, without the Divine'.[7] In 1992, Gascoyne asserted, citing Hölderlin again, that 'It is the job of the poet to go on holding on to something like faith, through the darkness of total lack of faith, what Buber calls the eclipse of God'.[8] Gascoyne's was a constant quest, clearly expressed by the Solitary in ***Night Thoughts***: 'I am a man of a benighted century, famished for light and praying out of darkness in the dark'.

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In Chapters 1-5 titles of works by Gascoyne appear in bold; all the published poems are underlined.

The text of Chapters 1-5 comprises 80 000 words (excluding footnotes).

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6 'There is a poem by Victor Hugo called "*Ce que dit la bouche d'ombre*", the mouth of shadow; the poet is a mask, through whom words from beyond come. Baudelaire is an example and Rimbaud and Mallarmé.' 'Gascoyne in interview': *Stand* Vol.33, no.2 (spring 1992), p.21.

7 Gascoyne's epigraph for ***Night Thoughts***.

8 *Stand*, op.cit., p.25.

1 Roman Balcony & other poems

From 1930-32, while still a pupil at Regent Street Polytechnic Secondary School, Gascoyne regularly walked home down Charing Cross Road to visit Zwemmer's Bookshop and to buy back numbers of *transition* and *La Révolution surréaliste*. He told Michèle Duclos in an interview in June 1984 that he also purchased the Surrealist number of *This Quarter* (September 1932), and began to collect *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*.[1] 'I was familiar with most twentieth-century poetry up till then, that of Pound, Eliot, the Imagists, the poets associated with Harold Monro, his bookshop and his Chatto anthology, and then with the exciting emergence of Auden, Spender, MacNeice, *New Signatures* and *New Country*. [...] I first began to read Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Mallarmé in my teens, and then went on to read most contemporary French poets, the Surrealists in particular, as well as the then available translations of Rilke, Mayakovsky, Pasternak, Lorca and other outstanding Europeans.'[2]

Roman Balcony and other poems was published by the Temple Bar Publishing Co. (Lincoln Williams) in September 1932, self-financed by Gascoyne who was 16. Only one poem, 'Transformation Scene', had appeared in print previously, in *Everyman* on 19 May 1932 (p.356). He sent a copy of the collection inscribed to Canon and Mrs Robertson at the Salisbury Cathedral School, together with a letter (dated 11.12.32) 'from your affectionate old boy': 'Dear Mr Robertson, I thought that you might like to have a copy of my first book of poems which has just been published. It's rather exciting having a book published and I'm anxiously waiting for the reviews! - I don't hope to make much out of it, but if you could persuade anyone who knows or knew me to buy a copy it would be a great help [...]' When the collection came out, his mother told him, 'You'll only regret it later'. He has admitted since that, 'Before long this proved to be true. For many

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1 'Entretien avec David Gascoyne (Londres)' in *Cahiers sur la Poésie*, No.2. numéro speciale David Gascoyne (1984), pp.18-19. See also, Gascoyne, 'Introductory Notes' to ***Collected Poems 1988*** (Oxford University Press, 1988), p.xiv.

2 From the typescript, 'Poetry in Britain Today' (a photocopy of which is in my possession). See also, Lucien Jenkins, 'David Gascoyne in Interview' in *Stand*, Vol.33, No.2 (spring 1992), p.21.

years after the mid-'30s, I did not wish this early "slim volume" ever to be alluded to.'[3] While a small proportion of individual poems (fourteen out of forty-one) has appeared since 1932 in various books and anthologies,[4] he has firmly resisted the re-publication of any others or of the collection as a whole. Nine poems appeared in the ***Collected Poems 1988***, 'Five Netsukés of Hottara Sonja', 'Fading Avenues', 'Summer's Echo', 'Before Storm', 'Evening on the Thames', 'Eclipse of the Moon', 'Reflected in Jet', 'Plethora', 'Lucubration' (pp.3-10), which he reduced to five in the ***Selected Poems*** of 1994 (Enitharmon). This was in the face of strong opposition from those of us involved in the selection who are convinced of the quality of these poems by an adolescent and of their significance for the more mature work that was to follow, and very much wish to bring out others from limbo and see them in print. I spent an afternoon with Gascoyne at his home in September 1995 when, with a lack of enthusiasm he did not attempt to conceal, he started to leaf through the collection. I watched as his attention became less and less cursory and his interest grew rapidly and became specific. After we had discussed several of the poems briefly, he suddenly turned to me and commented: 'I'm surprised to say that some of these poems are rather better than I've always thought.' In a very real sense, he had turned his back not long after publication more than 60 years ago, on what he has always considered an embarrassing collection.

Gascoyne has discussed his early political awareness with Michèle Duclos: 'J'avais déjà une conscience politique qui s'exprimait dans ma poésie depuis le début. Ainsi, le titre de mon premier receuil, ***Roman Balcony***, traduit l'idée de la décadence romaine, la fin d'une civilisation.'[5] He was influenced, he told her, by Walter Pater and his reading of *Marius the Epicurean*, and explained his chosen title for the collection: 'J'avais choisi pour titre [...] une image qui voulait expliquer l'état du monde actuel.'[6] As far as '*Balcony*' is concerned, he thought it an unconscious reminiscence of Pater.[7] He

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3 'Introductory Notes', op. cit. p.xiii.

4 'Mood' in Jon Stallworthy (ed.), *First Lines'* (Carcanet, 1987), pp.107-8; 'Vista', 'Rain Clouds', 'The Bridge' in Allan Rodway (ed.), *Poetry of the 1930s* (Longmans, 1967), pp.174-6; 'Rain Clouds' also appeared in A.T. Tolley, *The Poetry of the Thirties* (Gollancz, 1975), pp.231-2; 'Prison' in Robin Skelton (ed.), *David Gascoyne, Collected Poems* (Oxford University Press, 1965), pp.ix-x of the 'Introduction'.

5 'I was already politically aware and this expressed itself in my poetry from the outset. So the title of my first collection translates the notion of Roman decadence, the end of a civilization' (the translation is mine here and elsewhere, except when indicated otherwise).

6 'I had chosen for the title an image which sought to explain the state of the contemporary world'.

7 Op. cit. p.20.

was to add a little to this in his introductory note to 'Mood', reprinted in Stallworthy's *First Lines*: 'The title reflects a concern with "the Decline of the West", a constant implicit theme in nearly all my poetry to date, the Roman Empire's decline and fall representing an immature metaphor for the continually increasing social and spiritual crisis experienced by my generation and its successors.' (p.107)

He was to emphasize again, in that same note, that 'the main influence to be detected in this precocious collection of juvenilia is that of the Imagists, who I had read for a while extensively.' Between 1914 and 1930, three important collections of Imagist poetry were published here and in America: *Des Imagistes* (The Poetry Bookshop, 1914), *Some Imagist Poets* (3 vols. Constable, 1915-17) and the *Imagist Anthology 1930* (Chatto & Windus, 1930). In his short account of Imagism (*The Egoist*, May 1915), F.S. Flint makes it very clear that it was T.E. Hulme who was at the forefront of the critical discussions about the need for 'absolutely accurate presentation and no verbiage', the determining principle of the movement. However, the history of Imagism is polemical, fraught with arguments, conflicts, disavowals and disputes among certain of the protagonists such as Ezra Pound, F.S. Flint and Amy Lowell.[8] There has been dissension, too, among their supporters about the importance of the respective roles of T.E. Hulme and Ford Madox Ford.

In 1913, *Poetry* (Chicago) published F.S. Flint's note on 'Imagisme' which identified three criteria: 'direct treatment of the "thing" whether subjective or objective; to use absolutely no word that did not contribute to presentation; as regarding rhythm, to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome.'[9]

In general, the main features of much Imagist poetry would seem to be its economy and delicacy of texture, and its focus on comparison, through simile and metaphor, though the characteristic style of the individual poets is always identifiable.[10]

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[8] See John Press, *A Map of Modern English Verse* (Oxford University Press, 1971), p.30.

[9] Quoted in *Imagist Poetry*, (ed.) Peter Jones (London: Penguin Books, 1972), pp.18, 129.

[10] In *The Fortnightly Review* (September 1914), Pound expressed the distinction as he saw it between symbol and image. 'The symbolists' *symbols* have a fixed value, like numbers in arithmetic, like 1, 2 and 7. The Imagists' *images* have a variable significance like the signs a, b and x in algebra [...] the author must use his *image* because he sees it or feels it , not because he thinks he can use it to back up some creed or some system of ethics or economics.' Pound, who gave the movement its name, would go on to

'It's obvious that at first I was under the influence of the Imagists,' Gascoyne told Michel Rémy in the interview extract published in *Temenos* 7 in 1986, 'as you can see in ***Roman Balcony***, actually through a close friend of my mother's, Miss Wright, whom I mentioned in my ***Journal*** under the initials R.F.W. After I had left Salisbury Cathedral School one of the first things I read was Harold Monro's anthology *Twentieth Century Poetry*. After my father had been transferred to London I often visited one of his brother-in-law's aunts, where I used to play the piano, Satie or Schönberg; she was very fond of modern poetry and had a number of anthologies.' (p.267) Gascoyne cannot remember now, so many years later, which particular Imagist anthology he read, though he does recall that this same 'Aunt' Kate from Trinidad who settled in Richmond asked him in his middle teens if he had read any of the Imagist poets. He had not, and she lent him an anthology which was his introduction to Pound,[11] 'H.D.', J.G. Fletcher, F.S. Flint, and others. He is not sure, but he thinks that 'the repeated image of gardens in the rain is probably taken from Fletcher, the American Imagist who,' he suspects, 'may have influenced the early Frederic Prokosch.'[12]

He acknowledges, too, 'very definitely' in his first collection, the influence of T.S. Eliot's 'early Imagist poems' and *The Waste Land*, of Baudelaire in 'The Bridge'and possibly that of Verlaine, 'though my discovery of Rimbaud would relegate the importance of Verlaine.' Gascoyne felt (September 1995) that he could detect the influence of Edgell Rickword ('very left') in 'The Don Returns', and he mentioned in particular Rickword's ***Invocations to Angels*** of 1924. He thinks today that while he must have been reading Laura Riding at that time, he was probably not influenced directly by Christina Rossetti because 'it was very difficult then to get hold of copies of her work.' He had listened to Eliot reading her poems at the Monros' Poetry Bookshop in 1930 when

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designate similes and metaphors as the poet's pigment in his search for a meeting-point for poets and painters.

[11] Gascoyne had an opportunity to meet Pound in 1951 when he was in America with Kathleen Raine but he got out of the taxi on the way to St. Elizabeth's Mental Hospital, leaving his companion to make the visit. He very much regrets this lost opportunity now, but Pound's broadcasts during the War were 'too bitter a pill to swallow'. He seems to recall very vividly today that at that moment in the taxi, the 'moral imperative' heavily outweighed the excitement of meeting face to face a poet he had long admired. Kathleen Raine's account of the meeting, *Visiting Ezra Pound*, was published in 1999 (Enitharmon Press), acknowledging the argument afterwards between herself and Gascoyne.

[12] *The Assassins* (Chatto & Windus, 1936).

he was fourteen.[13] He told me in 1994 that he has 'always loved the poetry of Walter de la Mare,' and when I stayed with him in September of the following year he described his first acquaintance with de la Mare's work 'which was a very strong influence in my middle teens. Miss Piercy was the teacher of the English class in the dining room at Salisbury Cathedral School and she introduced me and the other choristers to the poet with "Softly, silently, now the moon..." ['Silver'].' Later, he discovered sadly when it was too late to make contact, that de la Mare had lived within walking distance of his parents' house. In the choristers' holidays, they were allowed to 'go into town and buy things at the shops. The young man in the bookshop I visited regularly had fallen in love with my mother.' Gascoyne bought from him copies of de la Mare's highly individual prose works, *Henry Brocken*, *The Return* and *Memoirs of a Midget*.

Picking up his own copy of ***Roman Balcony*** in September 1995, and flicking aimlessly it seemed through the eighty-seven pages, he began almost immediately to look intently at particular poems, and his first comment after a short silence was, 'This collection does show a considerable knowledge of and familiarity with music.' Together, we examined some of the titles which illustrate this immediately: 'Van Dieren' (Gascoyne explained that he is 'a forgotten English composer, associated with Peter Warlock and Delius'),[14] 'Nocturne', 'The Bell Ringers'; in several other poems such as 'Spring Night' and 'Transformation Scene', the sound of music is an integral part of the poetic world he creates.

Gascoyne was also struck by the fact that he had chosen in the ***Roman Balcony*** collection to use lower case letters at the beginning of each line of verse in more than a few poems. 'I avoided it after a while,' he confided, 'because everybody else was doing it.' Significantly, however, it was his selection of form and metre in the poems which seemed to intrigue him more and more with each re-discovery. He sat across from me

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[13] Entry in recently discovered orange Notebook from 1950: 'Found today in a Holborn shop (17.1.50) a copy of the Apolypse [sic] - commentary of a poet whose sweet, sad, grandiosely and bitterly resigned music I have loved for a very long time - Christina Rossetti. Ever since I first heard T.S. Eliot reading "Passing away, saith the world, passing away", in Harold Monro's Poetry Bookshop at a time when I must have been still a schoolboy, I suppose.'

[14] However, in his essay, 'The Poetry of Edward Lowbury' in *Agenda*, Vol.26, no.4 (winter 1988), p.60, John Press writes that Bernard van Dieren 'was regarded by some musicians in the 1920s as a major composer. He was a patient and friend of Lowbury's father'.

reading aloud and tapping out the beats in the lines on his book or the arm of his chair. 'I'm pleased to see that I used clipped lines.' Then, a few moments later, ' And I like to see the use of four syllable lines in this poem, and my experiments with different techniques.' He added with a smile, 'When I broke the rules, I always did so deliberately.'

Accurate observation and a delicate precision of style without verbiage, apparently exhibiting T.E. Hulme's determining principle, are unmistakable features of this first collection. However, in several lines in a variety of poems, ('Prison', for example), the imagery pre-dates Gascoyne's more self-conscious use of the Surrealist technique which would emerge clearly for the first time the following year, 1933, with 'And the Seventh Dream is the Dream of Isis' in the October issue of *New Verse.*

The poet takes a Roman balcony as his vantage point at the beginning of the collection, placing his speaker back in the years of that empire's terminal decline, yet at the same time implying continuity through the notion that history repeats itself, and addressing what would remain a major preoccupation: the decline of the West. Adopting the persona of a wealthy Roman, the seated speaker gazes from the balcony of his villa at the city and the Tiber. 'Sad with sin', he accepts that he is tainted, part of the decline of Rome and its culture.[15] He is immobile, where the all-seeing speaker in Blake's 'London' prowls the streets of that capital on foot, both speakers acknowledging a blighted and a corrupt world; but there is significant motion in the texture of this poem: 'palpitating tide' (twice), 'climbs', 'tumbling', 'whirling', 'fluttering', 'fall', 'swift fantastic shadow', and the movement reaches a crescendo in the third, fourth and fifth lines of the middle verse:

> Like the vast, tumbling cloud that sweeps
> Whirling over the faded sky,
> Full of the shadow of death.

The light is 'pale', the sky 'faded' because, as so often in the poems of ***Roman Balcony***, it is early evening and nightfall is approaching, indicative, too, of change or transformation, a constant theme. Colours are bright: 'yellow waters', 'purple wine

[15] This poem anticipates Auden's 'The Fall of Rome' in *Nones*: the disintegration that brings about the fall of city and empire is internal.

within my golden cup', in what is essentially a very visual poem with no emphasis on sound, but the mood is sombre, the air cold after rain: 'rain-beaten roses', 'a withered petal falls from the trellis'. There are three verses of five lines of varying length with upper case letters at the beginning of each; there is no rhyme.

In contrast to the title poem, 'Roman Balcony', the setting of the visionary 'Roman Ghosts', which has no first-person speaker, is a 'vast shining plain of the shore', where ghostly figures from the distant past who vanish into the mist are juxtaposed with specific, particularized sounds: 'The trumpet's echo', 'the noisy sun clashes its swords', 'snorting steeds', 'A metal-clattering cavalcade advances'. It is here that the conscious or unconscious influence of T.S. Eliot first makes itself apparent. The latter's 'Triumphal March' resonates with the sounds of the trumpets and the repetition of the line: 'Stone, bronze, stone, steel, stone, oakleaves, horses' heels'.[16] Movement is again readily identifiable in 'ride' (twice), 'cavalcade advances across the beach', 'waves that flap against the shore', 'plumes that wave', but more significantly, given the visual as well as the aural quality of this poem, colour is absent except by implication in sky, sand and sea. While the effective metaphor, with which the last stanza begins,

> The ostrich feathers
> of the waves
> that flap against the shore
> mimic the plumes
> that wave from the helmets.

would seem to indicate the influence of the Imagists, and more particularly that of 'H.D.', on the young poet, it is Gascoyne's accomplished use in the first stanza of the synaesthesia or 'sense transference' exploited by the French *symboliste* poets,[17] which is the more startling:

> The noisy sun
> clashes its swords
> on the horsemen's armour.

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[16] 'Triumphal March' was issued as no.35 in the series of 'Ariel' poems with drawings by E. McKnight Kauffer (London: Faber & Faber, 1931). The design on the title page is that of a Roman soldier with his shield.

[17] See, for example, the sonnet by Rimbaud,'Voyelles', and Baudelaire,'Correspondances'.

The intensity of the heat given off by the celestial body and the potency of the refracted rays of light assault the senses to the extent that the effects are mediated in terms of aggressive, bellicose sound. In the first stanza of T.S. Eliot's 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' there is an image of similar complexity. In a city street 'held in a lunar synthesis'

> Every street-lamp that I pass
> Beats like a fatalistic drum.

The form employed in 'Roman Ghosts' is irregular, with stanzas of nine, five and eight lines and no rhyme. Lower case letters are used at the start of all lines except where each of the four sentences begins.

Lower case letters are similarly used in 'Vista' where the poet is the observer of a garden scene whose visuality is conspicuous; colour is a major concern, but here sound is limited to the 'clatter of geese'. His description, clear and concentrated, rendered largely by means of metaphor and simile, is very clearly informed by his reading of the Imagist poets:

> A clatter of geese
> fantastically waddling
> over the jade silk lawn

in the first stanza, is followed in the second by:

> Behind them dark trees
> genii clad in a green smoke
> of leaves.

The third denotes the influence of 'H.D.' in its metaphor and simile, and is unusual because of its indication of warmth as opposed to the coldness prevalent in a number of the early poems in the collection:

> Under the trees,
> warm and silent,
> the mysterious, placid colours
> of rhododendrons burn,
> faintly,
> electric blossoms,
> like calm, pale,
> subaqueous coral, ... anemones.

'Nocturne', focusing on winter trees under the moonlight, illustrates the coldness and hardness of Gascoyne's vision [18] of the season of death:

> The bare trees,
> The lifeless trees,
> Trees of Winter,
> Are erect as spears
> In the wet light of the moon
> That floats entangled in their iron branches.
>
> O Trees,
> O wet moonlight,
> (Reflected across the large black waters of the lake),
> O white balustrades,
> O Death!

The acutely perceived in 'Vista', 'up the slope of a summitless hill', 'low, contorted trees', 'a lavender sky', is juxtaposed with the vague, the secretive and the mysterious: 'sightless, unknown regions', the mysterious, placid colours', 'What secret is hidden /at the end of the avenue?' The notion that all is seen in its individuality, is balanced by the implication that all is not seen, that something else lies just out of view beyond the confines of the frame. It is in much the same way that Walter de la Mare reaches beyond the visible world in his poetry. The irregularity of the form, five stanzas of varying length of two, three, five and eight lines seems to underline the mysterious quality, the sense of another, hidden world or worlds co-existing with the precisely realized vista with which we are presented. In his essay *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James made the point that,

> our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness, entirely different [19].

In 'Reflected in Jet', the speaker urges:

> Draw back this curtain:
> Here the houris languish
> watching their reflections
> in amber or in jet.

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[18] Even bleaker are these verses near the end of 'Dirge': 'The streets are void./The sky is void/mirroring them./For ever and ever./Eternity is grey. Time is grey./There is no hope./We are chained to greyness.'

[19] Edited by Martin E. Marty, Penguin Classics series (London: Penguin Books, 1982), p.388.

The second and final stanza begins:

> On our side of the curtain
> we contemplate carefully
> One tall glass of wine ...

With 'Eclipse of the Moon', Gascoyne pays homage to Walter de la Mare and his poem 'Silver'. As in de la Mare's poetry, there are indications here, in 'enchanted walls' which '...strangely divide', of another dimension, the sense of a different, perhaps parallel, world beyond that of the visible. The speaker is an observer of this scene of darkness and light, a moonlit landscape given specificity by his description of water, lake, dewponds, gardens, trees and roses, where the bedroom window acts as a frame and serves to indicate the demarcation-point between the 'inner darkness' and 'the silver outside'. Colours (blue, green, greyish, white, black) are very much in evidence:

> let blue darkness swim,
> silent as water

as are indications of the passage of time as the eclipse begins:

> Beyond the trees
> the moon grows dim;
> a shadow creeps
> across its rim.

The form is much more regular, six stanzas with four or five syllable lines, where the second and fourth lines rhyme.

Gascoyne has acknowledged the fascination for him of John Gould Fletcher's word-paintings of gardens in the rain. An early poem by Fletcher, 'The Evening Clouds', demonstrates the melancholy, autumnal quality of the scene and its accompanying mood:

> Like old parks full of autumnal branches
> Which the winds agitate, slowly to and fro;
> The evening clouds, grey interwoven,
> Sway in a stately measure of old. ...

'The Blue Symphony' might suggest that Fletcher's poetry is closer to what Ezra Pound meant by literary impressionism:

Sombre wreck - autumnal leaves;
Shadowy roofs
In the blue mist
And a willow branch that is broken. ...

Fletcher was an 'Imagist' only by association - as friend and colleague of Amy Lowell - rather than through commitment.[20] 'Irradiations VII' presents Fletcher at his most characteristic:

The winds come clanging and clattering
From the long white highroads whipping in ribbons
up summits:
They strew upon the city gusty wafts of apple-
blossom,
And the rustling of innumerable translucent leaves.

What is particularly interesting here, is the importance of both sound and movement, reminiscent of Gascoyne's preoccupations in the poems studied.

In 'Transformation Scene', the gliding movement outward, beyond the warm firelit room filled with shadows to 'the cold, sweet air' of a world outside, is accomplished only through the casting of a spell 'woven of aerial texture' as 'A web descends upon the room'. Music in various sounds and forms accompanies the transformation into 'this antique but newly discovered paradise' inhabited by apes and parrots:

A veil of semibreves and minims
A melody pensive - now plaintive...

'We will dance a slow pavane...'; 'We will let laughter and low lute-notes float across the lake.' Although it is possible to detect the influence of J.G. Fletcher in lines like 'And with a bowl of chrysanthemums,/Freshly gathered from the wet garden', and

As we glide lightly through the willow's foliage,
fixing our eyes on some white statue through the leaves...

[20] He made his position on Imagism very clear in a letter to Lowell. 'I do not believe that a poem should present an "image", I believe it should present an emotion: I do not believe in "clear, hard and definite presentation". I believe in a complete, that is to say, shifting and fluid presentation [...] I do not believe in cadence, but in rhythm (a different thing altogether).' Quoted in J.B. Harmer, *Victory in Limbo: Imagism 1908-1917* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1975), p.95.

a surprised Gascoyne told me that 'Transformation Scene' is 'typical of Wallace Stevens, though I hadn't read him then.'

It was when he was fifteen that he came across *In Defence of Sensuality* by J.C. Powys, and it was this essay which 'encouraged and inspired me to look differently at the essence of ordinary things and colours' on the bus and train journeys to and from Regent Street Polytechnic School, when he was living in Twickenham. 'New Cut Market' illustrates very clearly the acuteness of his observation. The market 'was adjacent to the Old Vic.' It was 'invariably a Saturday' when Gascoyne visited it: 'I used my season ticket.' His intention in this poem of thirty lines of six stanzas in a pattern of three, five, seven lines repeated, is to communicate the 'picturesque' quality of the evening scene, people, sounds, produce, in 'A kaleidoscope of summer colours'. Given the title, there is a sense of immediacy: 'Here is a fish stall...', 'Here is fruit displayed on a barrow', and there is a strong appeal to eyes, ears and sense of smell. The speaker focuses on the people and the stalls, but is also able to direct our gaze 'high above the market' and the confines of the 'narrow street' to the glass of the railway station (Waterloo), and Janus-like to look backwards and forwards in time:

> And I, standing by unseen
> In the mouth of a lamp-lit tunnel,
> Think how historians in a thousand years' time
> Will reconstruct this scene, as we
> Imagine scenes of ancient Rome,
> And how they may find it
> As picturesque as I.

Gascoyne drew my attention to the last line and commented, smiling, 'There never was such an aesthete as Pater!'

His poem 'Fading Avenues', again irregular in form with six stanzas of varying length, is impressive in its visuality. The avenues, though 'fading' are alive with colour: 'rusty and serrated leaf', 'a scarlet stem', 'black-spotted leaves', 'a crimson coat', 'when grey's on the sheen of green', 'the green of its foliage', 'the stems of the shrubs are black', - and the scene breathes at certain moments with a surging vitality: 'alive with the sun-caught moisture', 'one pine exulting stands', '...with a sudden ignition of leaves'. Yet the tone of the poem, which has a meditative quality, reflects simultaneously an awareness of

mortality,[21] of the process of change at work in the season of decay: 'The trees stand brooding over their disintegration', 'The ichor within grows lifeless and cold', 'and the mould of the flower-beds is sour and dark'. The speaker stands 'cold, dreaming', drifting in and out of the reality before him, as gentle sounds recede and grow more distant, and he wonders,

> Whose tomb shall we discover
> in the dun shade of the woods
> at the end of the fading avenues?

In the impressionistic 'Rain Clouds', where lines two, four, six, eight and ten are very short, between two and four syllables in length, the setting is a cold garden. The observer is preoccupied with a weather-change which is also suggestive of the transitional phase from late summer to early autumn: 'Faded roses/Tumble delicately over the old brick wall'. There is colour here, in a series of two metaphors and a simile: first the Imagistic 'Marigolds burn/on the margin of the green', but then

> ... behind the darkling trees
> clouds rear,
> dark and ominous, rain-burdened,
> like shreds of an old dream
> which tumbles out of its chilly case
> when the door of the mind
> is opened by memory.

The rain-clouds of the title seem to threaten more than rain.

In 'Lucubration' the speaker is induced to sing and to write his 'words in the night' by 'the fir branch's gloom/and the butterfly's white' in a room that he considers a prison with its fireplace chair and the 'perpetual clock-face'. Here the 'old grief' releases stale memories which increase 'old ennui and spleen' (the latter an important Baudelairean concern). In terms of form, 'Lucubration' represents one of the most regular poems in the collection: two stanzas of eight lines each, lower-case letters at the start of

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[21] Derek Stanford considers that in this poem 'the instincts towards both life and death are quite effectively combined; the conclusion of the poem describing decay, rediscovering life, and finally reverting to the original idea of death;' that 'the subject of death appears as a discovery intriguing as the first'. See 'The Unity of David Gascoyne' in *Poetry Quarterly*, Vol.10, no.4 (winter 1948), p.250. Further citings as (*DSUG*).

every line except one and nine, and rhyming couplets. All the lines are of five or six syllables, with the exception of line ten which has seven.

The poem entitled 'Prison' engages with shifting perceptions, the interplay between the world of dream and that of reality, between darkness and light, but with more than that. It is as if the young poet, some three years before he went to France to research his historical account of the movement, is already acknowledging the Surrealists' desire to break down the barriers between subjectivity and objectivity, 'to abolish all formal distinction between dream and reality', as he would express it in the 'Aims and Methods' section of his 'Premier Manifeste Anglais du Surréalisme'.[22] While there is an appeal to the auditory and the tactile: 'I hear a gramophone', 'a window opens', 'the window closes', 'I know that my trembling fingers will meet/The leaves of the tree that grows in this cupboard', the poem is predominantly visual. There are precise references to cupboard, mask, walls, plain, sky, window, 'sun-scorched grass', 'leaves', and 'Red-robed riders pass on tall horses'. The speaker's eyes are open and closed at different moments. There are also the eyes of the 'Chinese mask/That glares down upon me/From one high corner' and there is movement between what the speaker can perceive in the dark within the cupboard, and what he can see in his mind's eye 'In the clear air outside' when, 'Within no prefixed hour, a window opens'. An air of mystery suffuses the poem with its antinomies day-night, light-dark; frontiers or barriers can only be crossed by an arbitrary act of will or of imaginative flight. Caught up claustrophobically in a situation from which there is apparently no escape, at the beginning of the poem,

> It is dark and stifling within this cupboard.
> I cannot open the door.

the speaker emphasizes in the concluding tercet that only his mind can roam freely outside of and beyond his wooden prison,[23] for

> If I move my body from this spot
> I know that the walls will follow me,
> Moving always like walls in a mirror.

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[22] In *Cahiers d'Art X* (June 1935).

[23] There is, perhaps, an echo here of a line from Keats's 'Fancy': 'Open wide the mind's cage door'.

He is marooned between waking and dreaming, in a dimension where time seems to operate in slow motion, where the walls that confine him shadow his movements 'like the moon' or 'like walls in a mirror'. The scene, presented as it is by the speaker, would appear to him to be quite 'normal', yet at the same time we as readers are in a position to discern that he is experiencing hallucinations and delusions, aware of his sense of dislocation and destabilization - and of his anxiety, identified in his 'trembling fingers'. The space-time fabric of the world of the poem has become subtly different. In this way, the speaker's apprehension of reality is heightened, the visuality of the external world is eerily beautiful and crystal clear, and 'marvellous' in the Surrealist sense.[24] The ambience produced is like that of the frozen quality of some of the early paintings of Giorgio de Chirico, such as 'The Dream Transformed' (1913), 'Mystery and Melancholy of a Street' (1914), 'The Masks' (1915), 'Enigma of a Day' (1914) or, more particularly, 'Landscape in a Room' (1926) where a tree, growing in front of a cupboard, has reached the level of the ceiling and beyond. It was de Chirico who described so vividly in a journal extract his evocation of a vision: 'This is the hour of the enigma...' Gascoyne's evocative prose poem, 'The World of Chirico' was first published in 1933.[25]

Robin Skelton refers to 'Prison' in his introduction to the ***Collected Poems*** (1965): 'One poem in particular anticipates the later poems about suffering'.[26] The word 'anticipates' is significant because there is no specific sense of 'suffering' in these twenty-four lines of irregular length. The strange juxtapositions, 'Red-robed riders' passing over the plain's scorched grass as simultaneously a window closes and a gramophone is heard by the speaker[27] whose space in the cupboard is invaded by the tree that grows there, look forward to the more definitive Surrealist imagery and automatic writing of Man's ***Life Is This Meat.***

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[24] Conroy Maddox, the Surrealist painter, has written, 'There is, after all, a state of mind in which the marvellous is contained within the real. For it is not the mysterious but the marvellous that is sought after...' From a draft text (1987) quoted in Silvano Levy (ed.), *Conroy Maddox: Surreal Enigmas* (Keele University Press, 1995), p.148.

[25] On September 14th in the *New English Weekly*, as the last of 'Ten Proses'. It was published again as a footnote on pp.73-4 of Gascoyne's ***A Short Survey of Surrealism*** (Cobden-Sanderson, 1935).

[26] Op. cit., p.ix, followed by the full text of the poem.

[27] Possibly an unconscious reference to the lines in part III, 'The Fire Sermon', of *The Waste Land*: 'She smooths her hair with automatic hand,/and puts a record on the gramophone'.

The influence of T.S. Eliot is more than marginal in 'Evening on the Thames'. Gascoyne told me in September 1995, 'I dare say I had read ***The Waste Land*** then.' Like Eliot in the third section, *The Fire Sermon*, he is focusing on a particular river in the heart of a particular urban society, that of post-First World War England. Eliot's

> The river sweats
> Oil and tar
> The barges drift
> With the turning tide
> Red sails
> Wide
> To leeward, swing on the heavy spar...

finds a distinct echo in Gascoyne's

> ...The slender cranes...
> black, the slanting
> masts, the distant
> dome, the tiny
> figures on the
> barges at rest...

Emotion is absent from the poem which represents a form of literary impressionism - there are no end-stopped lines and lower-case letters are used at the start of fifteen out of the eighteen, - with a direct appeal to the eye, not the ear. The diction is conventional, the tone one of matter-of-fact reportage, with the exception of the unusual and effective visuality of 'collapse' in line seven:

> ...where the ripples
> of our boat course
> shining and collapse...

and of the sun's rays which are described as 'solemn'. Unusually, colour is largely absent apart from 'blue' and 'black'. The only human presence is defined by 'the tiny figures'.

Looking again in 1995 at 'Exhaustion' which has never been reprinted, Gascoyne found it 'reminiscent of Eliot's early Imagist poems'. If the four portraits that form the impressionistic 'Preludes' reflect a distinct sense of urban alienation and disillusion filtered through Baudelaire (and Corbière and Laforgue), Gascoyne adopts a similar tone in his poem which, like Eliot's 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' appears to express the heightened sensibility of its speaker. Both poets adopt imagery which might be termed

'Surrealist'. In Eliot, street lamps and moon become sinister anthropomorphic personalities. Walking at midnight in the city street 'held in a lunar synthesis', the speaker finds

> Every street lamp that I pass
> Beats like a fatalistic drum,
> And through the spaces of the dark
> Midnight shakes the memory
> As a madman shakes a dead geranium.
> ...
> The street lamp said, 'Regard that woman
> Who hesitates toward you in the light of the door
> Which opens on her like a grin.
> And you see the corner of her eye
> Twists like a crooked pin.'

In Gascoyne's 'Exhaustion',

> At night the street-lamps send long tentacles
> Which slide through the dusty window-panes,
> Pulling off the withered petals
> Of the poppies which perpetually descend the stairs.

Similar 'Surrealist' wordplay is already present, too, in 'An Unfolding of Tapestry', 'Death of a Heretic' and 'Seaside Tragedy'. The visuality and ambience of the dreamscape in 'An Unfolding of Tapestry':

> Needles of light crackle in this dream,
> Unwinding the ribbons in our hair.
> Let us open the back door.
> Perhaps blue moonlight will drift in
> Cold as a breath from the pine-woods.
> Is this fruit lifeless, moonlit upon the table?

are markedly similar to those in 'The Dream Transformed' painted by de Chirico in 1913. Gascoyne's life-long interest in dreams (a major preoccupation of the Surrealists) is signalled in the ending of the poem:

> We had waited long for subconscious dreams
> To spin themselves into coloured cloth.
> At last unfolded it seems complete,
> But a new thread begins as soon as one is broken,
> And we must wait until new dreams appear.
>
> It is useless to confute
> These whispered returns.

Here the worlds of reality and dream elide: the flimsy curtain between them has dissolved as, in defiance of all rational laws,

> The moonlit fruit
> free at last
> drops from its dish
> into the tapestry
> near the autumn lake
> where the swans
> drift.[28]

The speaker's anxiety and dislocation in 'Psychological Fragment' are expressed in his association of the 'indefinite horror' and 'that urge of faint terror' with 'unquiet water'. Subtle and disturbing changes are altering the accustomed face of reality. It is a world where the very air can undergo a frightening transformation:

> rocks are opened suddenly
> in the dark solitudes
> and blossoms strange
> wander vaguely into sight
> and unknown words form in the air.
> The air (pale, secret as flowers),
> is as green as the sea
> and as blue as the soul
> which is filled with indefinite horror.

The deliberate accentuation of the vagueness of the experience ('indefinite', 'faint', 'subtle') is in itself disturbing, as is the suggestion that language can become unrecognizable. He solicits release:

> O words which form in the air,
> free me from this subtle terror!

In 'Death of a Heretic' and 'Seaside Tragedy', Gascoyne has chosen to adopt the personae of two women, each of whom dies, the first at the stake consumed by fire, and the second by her own hand. In 'Death of a Heretic' he conducts a dramatic monologue: his speaker-victim observes directly the scene around her and the stake itself 'heaped

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[28] However, in a brief eleven-line poem, 'Dream by the Sea' the speaker is a cloud floating in a dream above the empty beach on the edge of the world 'where a great sun/is motionless within its arc of steel.'

about with piles of faggots', sharply focusing her attention and ours. She is about to die a very public death for her obstinately 'clutched' belief; her proud spirit 'will not bend'.

> Moonlight seems so very far away,
> And yet so close in my soul.

Her perception of the ordered universe is coming under attack, distorted by the play of her feverish imagination:

> In some far secrecy of the brain
> An urgent bell rings.
> Doors open and slam.
> Phantom shapes revolve and spin.
> Darkness is scattered with wavering claws.
> How many banners?
> What quicksands?

The witch's thoughts, philosophical musings, doubts and certainties are articulated with a sense of urgency as 'the flames lick nearer'. She welcomes their embrace as that of a lover in what is a form of sexual ecstasy: 'Kiss me all over.../Dear flames.../ Dear flames!...' Gascoyne had already begun to read Rimbaud, and it may not be coincidental that in one section of 'Mauvais Sang' in his *Une Saison en enfer*, Rimbaud compares himself to Jeanne d'Arc being burned at the stake surrounded by an infuriated mob.

Gascoyne makes a greater imaginative leap in the more ambitious 'Seaside Tragedy' [29] where the discourse is on two levels: a first-person speaker (passages are held within speech marks), the owner of a boarding house about to take her own life by drowning, and a third-person narrator who has a distancing function. T.S. Eliot employs an invented male persona throughout his early poem 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', but there are parallels that may be drawn. Each poet is more concerned with verbal effects than ideas, each presents the emotional undertones of an inner and outer landscape, and a speaker who (like Laforgue's personae) confronts emotional disaster, in

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[29] A short newspaper report is printed beneath the title: 'A Verdict of Suicide while of unsound mind was returned at the Inquest on Mrs X, a widow, at Bournemouth today. Mrs X was the Proprietress of a Boarding-house, and it was stated at the Inquest that financial and other troubles had been weighing on her mind for some time. -*Daily Paper*.' Interestingly, the starting-point for 'Seaside Tragedy', the brief news item above, provides a parallel with the Surrealist practice in Paris in the mid-1920s of drawing inspiration from the French newspaper equivalent, the 'faits divers' section published, for example, in *Le*

poems which are discontinuous in terms of narrative or 'plot' producing a 'mosaic' effect, composed of fragments of observation, reflection, conversation and experience in juxtaposition. Repetition, too, is a significant part of the wordplay.

But where for Prufrock 'there will be time/To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet/...And time yet for a hundred indecisions/And for a hundred visions and revisions', time is pressing for the boarding-house widow, so tired of worrying about the routine of removing her false teeth at night, buying chrysanthemums for her husband's grave, boiling the eggs for the right length of time, 'the linoleum or artichokes or the geyser'. There is direction here, lacking in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock':

> She went out of the bathroom.
> She ran downstairs.
> She went out by the French windows.
> She felt the cold sea-air on her face.
> . . . . . .
> She went across the lawn
> Toward the sea.

It is in the sea that, at the end of Eliot's poem, Prufrock has heard the mermaids singing 'each to each', and where the last words are '...and we drown'. Gascoyne's speaker's thought patterns indicate the seductive character of the water in the diction of 'the hush and the sway of the sea', and display unmistakable signs of dislocation:

> 'Immeasurably wan
> the grace of women,
> ...distant,...distant;...
> and rose-petals lying fading on the grass;
> and the hush and the sway of the sea,
> which seems like dew dying (sic) the fruit
> with ermine and jasmine.'

And again,

> 'Among the waves
> (gambolling upon the deserted shore),
> so many barrel-organs...
> They glide like stately swans
> over the surface:
> And their candles are reflected in the mirrors at
> their feet.'
> 'The beach is a chess-board.'

Monde. The Surrealists were interested in the 'strange but true' reports of coincidences and peculiar circumstances, but more particularly in crimes, and anarchist attempts to create chaos.

The proto-Surrealist nature of the last stanza quoted above brings to mind the bizarre images, alluded to earlier, in Eliot's 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night'.

Like Prufrock's, the widow's state of mind is one of pain and tension, but whereas he aspires to a state of anaesthesia, she seeks release in death by drowning. However, given the starting-point of Gascoyne's poem, the tone borders at times on black humour, nurturing more than a suspicion that the sixteen-year old poet is consciously writing a clever and accomplished pastiche of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'; there is something comic and pathetic, too, about that speaker's failure.

Music was of some significance to Eliot; if the inclusive title of 'Preludes' might suggest this preoccupation, it is much more patent in 'Portrait of a Lady' where we find 'attenuated tones of violins/Mingled with remote cornets', 'Among the windings of the violins/And the ariettes/Of cracked cornets/Inside my brain a dull tom-tom begins/Absurdly hammering a prelude of its own,/Capricious monotone/ That is at least one definite "false note"'. Gascoyne's narrator tells us that

> She saw the sea.
> She heard the barrel-organs
> Playing eternally
> At the bottom of the sea.

There are stronger echoes of Eliot in the repetitions, and in the dead-pan rhythm of enigmatic lines like, 'Let us exploit a vegetarian activity./Let us resolve the chords of the barrel-organ/playing in the street outside my window...', with their deliberate homage to Prufrock's injunction, 'Let us go then you and I,...Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets...' Or in lines such as, 'She said she was tired of playing bridge;/And of removing her teeth last thing at night before/going to bed.'

'Seaside Tragedy' resonates, too, with echoes of 'Death By Drowning', Part IV of *The Waste Land* where Phlebas is trapped in the cycle of a futile life, anxious about 'profit and loss'.[30] Gascoyne's speaker, too, has financial concerns:

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[30] Gascoyne wrote an introduction for *T.S. Eliot: Poesie*, edited and translated by Roberto Sanesi, (Gennaio: Tacabili Bompiani, 1983). Sanesi also translated the essay which has never appeared in English. Gascoyne told me that he talks 'about the Surrealist part of *The Waste Land* , as well as about

I would pay one-and nine
for an artichoke,
provided that it was fresh,
and gathered between half-past one
and half-past two in the morning
by an old man with a glass eye.

'Seaside Tragedy' is a very long poem of some one hundred and forty-three lines and twenty-five irregular stanzas. The next and the penultimate poem in the collection, comprises some seventeen stanzas and ninety-four lines. 'The New Isaiah', dedicated to Oswald Spengler, focuses tightly on the metropolis, that locus of alienation and despair, between two World Wars from the vantage point of the early 1930s, decade of the so-called Auden generation's interest in urban themes. In an essay, 'The Poet and the City', published in 1981 (and reprinted three years later)[31] and concerned principally with his own work commissioned for the B.B.C. Third Programme, *Night Thoughts* (1956), Gascoyne refers to 'the scarcely avoidable image or metaphor of the city taken as representing the oppressive and dehumanizing environment of the typical Western man of today' (p.138). 'The New Isaiah' reveals the influence, conscious or unconscious, of Dante, of Blake's harsh vision of late-eighteenth century London, of Shelley, Engels, Baudelaire and of Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (1927).

'Hell is a city much like London', wrote Shelley in 'Peter Bell the Third' where he sees 'Small justice shown, and still less pity'. Like Blake before him, Frederick Engels wandered the streets of London. He visited the slums of the metropolis: 'The very turmoil of the streets has something repulsive, something against which human nature rebels...' [32] Where Gascoyne pictures the indifferent hordes who pay the prophet no heed 'but arm themselves for wars/who whet their swords for another's blood,/who go a-whoring with their own inventions', Engels confronts 'The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest', which becomes 'the more repellent and offensive'.[33]

Eliot and Groucho Marx'. I included sections from the English typescript I was given in my edition of ***David Gascoyne: Selected Prose 1934-1996*** (Enitharmon Press, 1998), pp.182-185.

[31] *Poëzie in De Stad - La Poêsie dans la Ville*, Actes du 3e Festival de Poêsie à Louvain, automne, 1981, and in *Cahiers sur la Poésie*, No.2, numéro speciale David Gascoyne, (1984).

[32] 'The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844' in Karl Marx & Frederick Engels, *On Britain* (1962), pp.56-7.

[33] Ibid.

Walter Benjamin claims that Paris was 'the capital of the nineteenth century', and writes eloquently of Baudelaire's 'death-loving idyll' of the city. [34] The French poet's Paris, which he loved without any sense of revulsion, was a site of horror, where poverty, disease and suffering were commonplace, like the ubiquitous beggars and cripples.

Like other young poets in the decade before the publication of ***Roman Balcony and other poems***, (Eliot in London, Rilke in Paris, Brecht in Berlin, García Lorca in New York), Gascoyne confronts the metropolis which had become problematic in the age of rapid urban and technological expansion. The fascinated response by Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Laforgue and Apollinaire before them could never be termed half-hearted. Edward Timms argues convincingly that all these writers were unable to 'accept the city in its mundane routine. They are visionaries rather than realists. They explore an "unreal city" located between the extremes of hope and dread, between distant Utopia and imminent Apocalypse.'[35] Echoing Gascoyne's assertion quoted earlier from his essay 'The Poet and the City', he comments: 'The metropolis ultimately becomes a metaphor - a dynamic configuration of the conflicting hopes and fears of the twentieth century.' [36]

Appalled, 'The New Isaiah' 'with burning coals of fire on his head' walks the streets of London,

> ...the new Metropolis,
> that cruel City, built of stone and steel

peopled by degenerates. In the context of the play of day/night, light/dark, a sense of distaste revealed in his perception of the 'unveiled passions, unashamed crimes' and 'lust' warring 'bitterly with lust, where naked lights/illumine nightly what the day concealed', quickly gives way to palpable disgust in the 'retch and sweat', 'crude desires', 'greasy thigh' of the second stanza, and then to an almost voyeuristic horror:

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[34] *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, translated by Harry Zohn (Verso: 1983), p.171.

[35] Timms, Introduction to *Unreal City: urban experience in modern European literature and art*, (eds.) Edward Timms & David Kelley (Manchester University Press:1985), p.7. However, it seems relevant to point out that while James Joyce's city in his *Dubliners* is both paralyzed and paralyzing, *Ulysses* represents a celebration of Dublin.

[36] Ibid. p.4.

> In stinking sewers open to the sky
> the worn-out profligates lie down to die,
> and rank contagion fills the germ-laid air
> from poisoned corpses that the wind strips bare.

Neither art nor music flourishes in this city-world which 'has lost its mind'. The Spenglerian theme is announced in 'the slow inevitable decline/of nations, and the twilight of the West'. The latter-day prophet cries his warnings:

> 'The world-metropolis is built on dust,
> with fruitless labour, by the sweat of lust...
> [...]You cannot turn to God for there is no God left:
> Your God is the Machine, of soul bereft.
> Through all the discords of a striving host
> the Machine drones on, a steel ghost.'

Here, the line 'You cannot turn to God for there is no God left', might indicate an early acquaintance with Nietzsche's 'Death of God', or with Martin Buber's term 'The Eclipse of God'. There is also a strong echo here of the film-city created by Lang in *Metropolis* mentioned by Gascoyne in the 1981 essay from which I have already quoted: '[...]surely its powerful vision of enslaved masses toiling at giant machines in a vast underground city of the future, menaced by imminent disaster, is one of the most unforgettable achievements of the silent screen'.[37]

Gascoyne commented to me in 1995 that he found it interesting now to realize with the benefit of hindsight that several poems, long before its publication and first broadcast, had been rehearsing for and leading up to ***Night Thoughts***. The genesis of that 'radiophonic poem' can be found in 'The New Isaiah', 'They Spoke of a New City' (uncollected), 'Noctambules, 'The Anchorite', 'The Post-War Night', 'Metropolis By Night' and 'Night-Watchers' Ruminations', and an earlier version, 'Night Thoughts' published in *Botteghe Oscure*, No.XVII, (Spring 1956).[38]

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[37] Op. cit. p.139.

[38] 'They Spoke of a New City' appeared in *The Bookman* (March 1934); 'The Anchorite' which is incomplete, is in a Notebook in the British Library; 'Noctambules' was in *Daylight - European Arts and Letters*, edited by John Lehmann, No.1, (1941), and reprinted in ***Poems 1937-42***; 'The Post-War Night' was first published in *Botteghe Oscure*, No.1V, (1949), and then, in ***A Vagrant and other Poems*** (John Lehmann: 1950); 'Metropolis By Night' and 'Nightwatcher's Ruminations' were early versions of ***Night Thoughts***, in *Points*, No.19 (spring 1954).

The mythic prose-poem 'Mirabilia' (last in the collection), with an epigraph from Swedenborg,[39] is a metaphysical investigation in ten sections on a broad, even cosmic, scale into 'the way of the soul'. Gascoyne foregrounds fundamental issues of Life and Death, Good and Evil, Heaven and Hell, confronting primaeval rites, ancient legends, and superstitions, black magic, angels of Death, sphinxes, satyrs, vampires, demons, monsters, and the Prince of Darkness as he pans back and forth across the centuries. Much of the mythology together with the arguments and preoccupations incorporated in this long text would be extended and developed further more than thirty years later in ***Night Thoughts***, set in London 'a great nocturnal modern city'.[40] Significantly, it is in 'Mirabilia' that he begins to address for the first time those spiritual concerns with which, following his encounter with the work of Pierre Jean Jouve and his dissatisfaction with Surrealism as a poetic technique, he was to wrestle with such anguish in ***Poems 1937-42***. Of significance, too, in this poem whose subtitle might well have been 'The Dark Night of the Soul', (and which may have owed something to James Thomson's 'The City of Dreadful Night'), is the reference in the Swedenborg extract to 'the abyss'. In 'Mirabilia' we find the first appearance of 'the void' (Baudelaire's 'gouffre'), his own awareness of which was to torment him throughout the six years when he kept his journal and wrote the poems of the late 1930s and early 1940s. 'Lost souls, we groan in the dark'.

> Call and awaken us. We languish in darkness.
> The melancholy wind sings soft songs of despair.
> The trees are dead. We weep. All's finished. -
> Death.
>
> But can there be no harsh fanfare of awakening?
> Must we swim on in the void and be lost in nothing -
> ness for ever?

Gascoyne has acknowledged that one of Rimbaud's 'Villes' texts in ***Les Illuminations*** contains 'possibly the most remarkable of all premonitory expressions of the specifically modern City myth'.[41] Here, in 'Mirabilia' in Gascoyne's phantasmagoric vision, the metropolis is identified with 'secret and unnatural vices', while 'strange sounds creep out

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[39] 'Neither are the gates and doors of Hell visible except to those about to enter there; for these they are opened, and then there appears (sic) gloomy and, as it were, sooty caverns, tending obliquely downwards to the abyss where again there are several doors.'

[40] 'The Poet and the City', op. cit. p.136.

[41] Ibid. p.138.

from behind the closely-shuttered windows and fill with horror the solitary passer-by', and 'Fundamental evil is reborn within the heart of man':

> In the outskirts of the great cities enormous evil lurks unsuspected. Along the dreary pavement pass invisible demons.

What emerges from more than one section is what seems to be the speaker's distaste for sex and the sexual act, reflected in 'The New Isaiah':

> Amidst thick incense, and in the flickering light of torches, torches, the naked bodies of both men and women intertwine, covered with blood and shining with sweat. Secret and un-natural vices parade themselves with ghastly laughter.

In section IX, there is an account of a terrifying and vividly realized dream or nightmare. The last line of the first paragraph is strikingly effective in terms of sound and the creation of a particular ambience: 'The disillusioned wind sang everlasting cabalistic psalms in the branches'. And in section III, the imagery of the opening lines looks forward to Gascoyne's engagement with Surrealism and its obsession with the eye (the subject of 'Sonnet')[42]:

> In the secret watches of the Night the winds whisper secrets told them by the sphynxes of Istamerak. They tell of the the deserts where enormous Eyes stare out of the sand into the Sky.
>
> * * * * * *

The anxiously awaited reviews of ***Roman Balcony*** did not materialize until the *Times Literary Supplement* printed a short report on February 2nd 1933. The anonymous reviewer found that 'many of Mr. Gascoyne's verses contain a series of carefully marked impressions' (and quoted 3-4 lines each from 'Vista', 'New Cut Market' and 'Evening on the Thames') '...[which] culminate usually in a personal comment or the confession of a mood,' adding the proviso that 'the objective and the subjective parts of the poem hang loosely together' (p.79). It would be difficult to take issue with the main thrust of this

[42] In that poem, the emphasis is on 'ceaseless images that fill the sight/Of blinded eyes that see nor black nor white/Disintegrate and fall among the slain/Hours and dead days [...]. These are eyes 'So long ago transformed to sightless lead'.

reviewer's analysis, although the contention that the objective and subjective elements generally do not cohere seems to misrepresent Gascoyne's achievement. There is no awkwardness, whether he is the apparently objective observer or first-person speaker; the movement into or out of a persona present at the scene is seamless. I would take issue, too, with the assertion that 'the pictorial part is often too artificially contrived to be expressive'. The effectiveness of so many of these poems depends to a large extent on the acutely observed and realized, juxtaposed on occasion with the vague, the secretive and the mysterious ('Vista'). While there is no overt reference to specific painters or paintings, a wide range of colours and textures plays a vital role in the poet's attempt, following the example of Powys's *In Defence of Sensuality*, to capture and define the essence of things: windows, corridors, mirrors, lamps, candles, gardens, lawns, trees, shrubs, leaves, flowers, foliage, pools, lakes, rivers, hills, often rain-drenched under an evening or nocturnal sky with moon and stars present. He is clearly influenced by his reading and painstaking translations of the French Symbolist poets, Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Mallarmé, who sought to focus on states of mind through the potency of their choice of words and the images they created, suggestive as well as denotative.

Towards the end of the notice, the reviewer claims that 'his [Gascoyne's] prevalent mood is one of exhaustion and despair'. It is true that there is a brief poem entitled 'Exhaustion' and that the despair of the observer is unmistakable in 'The New Isaiah' and 'Mirabilia', but these are strong feelings which do not predominate in the context of the poetic world created in this collection, where so often the poems have a brooding, meditative quality of quiet resignation and acceptance ('Mood'); the pervasive mood , frequently sombre, is one of melancholy, elegiac, with a distinct awareness of the sadness implicit in the process of transition, denoting the end of a season or an era ('Summer's Echo'). Sometimes the reader is aware that all is seen in its individuality, but that at the same time, all is not seen (as in 'Vista'): there may be a sense of disquiet, a romantic air of mystery ('Spring Night'), but communicated through a gentle vagueness of muted sounds and vision (as in 'Van Dieren', for example). This is a world inhabited by the solitary, the isolate, who leads an intense inner life - a world cut off from a shared reality. There are no love poems. It is, on one level, a poetry of evasion: as in the verses of the Imagists, society is absent, and there is no allusion here (with the exception of 'New Cut Market') to the city or the metropolis until the last two poems in the collection

which examine the human condition, and operate at a different level. The *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer shows no awareness of the significance for Gascoyne of sound (not just music), or of the prevalence of coldness and of movement.

Stanford wrote in 1948 that 'the sense of possibility, of the latent futurity of things, by means of which escape was to be had from a generally undesirable present, from an odious prison of time and place – featured in all the more promising pieces' in ***Roman Balcony***. 'These adolescent dialectics [...]', he added, 'would prove of little interest to us had not Gascoyne possessed the power to develop the themes he treats of here in a deeper intellectual and emotional fashion'(*DSUG*, pp.249,250). In his essay 'Poetry in the 1930s and 1940s' (1994), Grevel Lindop comments that 'Although the poems of ***Roman Balcony*** were slight, they showed the influence of the Imagists and Eliot'.[43] While acknowledging that restrictions of space require concision, this is effectively a trite and almost dismissive judgment, which does not begin to valorize the accomplished and confident handling of material and forms in many of these poems, and the ambitious nature of the teenaged poet's intentions. Lindop, however, is right to point out that 'Gascoyne was from the beginning a modernist and he quickly turned to French Surrealism'. [44]

Professor Michel Rémy in several conversations with me in 1994 in Newcastle upon Tyne, made a clear distinction between what he termed the 'classical' texts of ***Roman Balcony and other poems*** as opposed to the Surrealist verses that followed.

Before the publication of the collection, and yet to find his own poetic voice, Gascoyne was already looking to Europe and to France in particular, and drawing upon that literary culture. Within a year he was living in Paris.

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[43] *The Penguin History of English Literature*, ed. Martin Dodsworth, Chapter 8, 'The Twentieth Century', pp.293-4.

[44] Ibid. p.294.

2 'PROPAGATING THE GOSPEL': A Short Survey of Surrealism & Man's Life is this Meat

Gascoyne had not yet been born when Hugo Ball began to orchestrate the performance art of the Cabaret Voltaire and the citizens of Zürich were introduced to Dada. 'If the date of February 6th, 1916 is exactly referred to as being that of the day the word [Dada] was "first pronounced" in Zürich, and thus of Dada's inception, then I can claim,' writes Gascoyne, 'to have been conceived in a London suburb almost exactly one month prior to this event.'[1] Sixteen years later, in 1932, he came across an early issue of *The Chapbook*, published some twelve years previously by Harold and Alida Monro of the Poetry Bookshop in Bloomsbury. Each issue of the review was devoted to a special theme or group. This particular number, 'having F.S. Flint as guest-editor [was] entirely devoted to introducing and attempting with a considerable degree of success to "explain" Dada to English readers, at any rate to a select and one hopes happy few of them...'[2] In another unpublished typescript, 'Francis Picabia: Funny Guy', his talk to the Royal Scottish Academy in 1988, Gascoyne refers again to the essay by the Imagist poet about 'the latest and most outrageous of Continental movements'.[3] The article in question, variously but imperfectly dated by Gascoyne more than fifty years later as '1921' and 'circa 1923', was Flint's 'The Younger French Poets' in *The Chapbook* of November 1920, in three sections of some thirty pages. 'It contained,' recalls Gascoyne, 'a considerable amount of information and translations of typical Dadaist poems as well as small reproductions from works by Picabia and Arp. In this way I first became aware of such other names as André Breton and Philippe Soupault, Louis Aragon and Tristan Tzara, Man Ray and Ribemont-Dessaignes.'[4] He expresses the wish in an unpublished and incomplete document begun

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1 Typescript, 'Surrealism Resurveyed', (n.d.,1980s) Chapter One, Introduction, p.10. Current scholarship has it that the Cabaret Voltaire opened in the city on *5th* February, 1916, and that on 8th April, 'Dada' was accepted as the title for a proposed new magazine. The word was mentioned in Ball's diary for the first time on this day.

2 Ibid.

3 Op. cit. p.1. Since published in ***David Gascoyne: Selected Prose 1934-1996***, (ed.) Roger Scott (London: Enitharmon Press, 1998), pp.404-426.

4 Ibid.

in 1980, that he had been able 'to preserve this little magazine, which aroused such excitement and enthusiasm in me when I first read it'.[5] However, it is demonstrably clear, Gascoyne explains, that 'there was never anything in England that could possibly be described as typifying an equivalent spirit on this side of the so-quickly crossed Channel'. He continues:

> Curious, though, that what one literary historian and critic (C.W. Bigsby) has called 'the Dada virus' never reached us, when the great 'flu epidemic which accompanied the outbreak of Peace had no difficulty in making its way here and extracting a drastic toll.' No doubt we phlegmatic islanders reacted to the first World mass-slaughter and massive demonstration of the triumph of mechanized warfare over all other forms of armed conflict in our own way, but anything that has the least whiff of anarchy or nihilism about it has always been regarded here, even by cynical and embittered intellectuals, with deep mistrust or mild amusement, and by the majority of the general public, of course, with the kind of moral indignation in which we most enjoy indulging.
>
> At the centre of any serious discussion of what Dada represents as an undoubtedly significant and symptomatic episode in the history of what for want of a less wornout term let us call the Modern Spirit, we must firmly centre our attention on the uncertainly definable phenomenon known as Nihilism.[6]

He told Lucien Jenkins in 1992, 'I prefer extremism, things which are on the margin, really; I still like Dada because it's anti-literature.' [7]

In an appreciation of Geoffrey Grigson,[8] more than ten years his senior, Gascoyne has written that '1933 was one of the most auspicious years of my life'. Three 'notable editors' were to show a 'favourable interest in my potential gifts as a writer'. As a poet, it would seem that his 'Surrealist phase' began in this year. When I asked Gascoyne in 1994 if he was ever conscious at seventeen, eighteen or nineteen of being an avant-garde poet, he replied: 'I suppose so, yes. I took it for granted, I think. Most of the people I was interested in belonged to that category.' He added, 'But you know that I don't believe in labels.' He would have been very much aware then of Rimbaud's injunction: 'Il faut être

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5 'Surrealism Resurveyed', op. cit., p.10. This magazine, he adds, 'has unfortunately gone the way of innumerable pamphlets, papers, and documents later to come into my hands largely through the good offices of Paul Eluard and Georges Hugnet, and later all the signed copies of Surrealist books either sold or left behind in various parts of the world, owing to an innate inability in my youth to retain personal possessions of value to me for more than a short time.' Ibid.

6 Ibid. p.14.

7 *Stand* interview, op. cit., p.22.

8 D. Gascoyne, 'Man of Principle', in *Grigson at Eighty* (Rampant Lions Press, 1985), pp.39-45.

absolument moderne'. In September and November 1933, A.R. Orage published 'Ten Proses' and 'Surrealist Cameos' in *The New English Weekly* 'of which he was the following year to encourage me to become for a while the art critic'; Grigson included Gascoyne's first attempt at 'a purely "automatic" Surrealist poem' - 'And The Seventh Dream Is The Dream Of Isis' in one of the early numbers of *New Verse* [9] which had appeared for the first time that year; Alida Monro had persuaded Cobden-Sanderson to publish Gascoyne's only novel, ***Opening Day***.

He still feels another considerable debt of gratitude to Grigson through whom he met for the first time on Sunday afternoons in Keats Grove, several poets whose friendship he came to treasure: Norman Cameron, Charles Madge, Kathleen Raine, and Gavin Ewart. However, it is his meetings with Grigson for tea once a week 'in a secluded café in a court off Fleet Street' for a while that 'undoubtedly exerted a crucial formative influence' on his development then. 'Their abiding significance for me now is, I believe, that they encouraged me in the discernment and appreciation of excellence in the arts, as well as abhorrence of humbug and inauthenticity.'[10] Re-reading in the mid-eighties Grigson's *The Private Art*, Gascoyne was struck by the 'many admirations and enthusiasms as well as dislikes and aversions, he found himself sharing with the author: Coleridge, Blake, Leopardi, Hölderlin, Novalis, Hugo, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Hopkins, Whitman and Trakl'.[11]

Interestingly, he also draws a parallel between the Grigson of the mid-1930s and Breton whom he would meet in Paris about the same time: 'he [Grigson] had already developed his rigorous but never rigid, personal but universally applicable standards of taste, and he applied them with the kind of intransigence I came later to associate with André Breton and the Surrealist group dominated by him'. [12]

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[9] No.5 (October 1933), pp.9-12. Gascoyne adds that Grigson accepted and printed 'some of my earliest Surrealist-type poems' and went on 'to publish other immature poems of mine [...] and also a few translations from Eluard, Arp and even Giacometti'. Op. cit., p.39.

[10] Ibid. p.42.

[11] Ibid. p.44.

[12] Ibid. p.41.

Gascoyne's first visit to France, in the last three months of that year, 1933, was financed largely by the advance royalties he received for the publication of his novel in September. According to the poet, 'it gives no indication of an awareness of Surrealism, though it contains a passage of enthusiastic reference to Rimbaud'.[13] He had not started to learn French seriously until the time when, while still at secondary school at the Regent Street Polytechnic, 'I first began to read poets like Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Mallarmé in the original, for myself [...] I soon acquired an acquaintance with modern French literature ("modern" in the sense of the term designating imaginative writing from Aloysius Bertrand's *Gaspard de la Nuit* onwards) perhaps unusual in someone of my age'.[14] By the time he left England on this first trip to Paris, where he spent his seventeenth birthday, he had obtained and become familiar with the contents of the special Surrealist number of the Anglo-French review *This Quarter*, published the previous autumn. 'One of the features of this mini-anthology of translated texts which specially intrigued me was a resumé of Duchamp's complex, enigmatic and best-known masterpiece, *La Mariée mis à nu par ses célibataires, même*, or "The Bride stripped bare by her own batchelors, even", accompanied by some of the fragmentary notes written in connection with it.'[15]

Gascoyne went abroad

> already full of an ever-increasing enthusiasm for the Surrealist movement. I fervently believed all that Breton and his followers said about the need not only to give expression to a vast, still only recently discovered New World (which was at the same time mankind's primaeval and universal "other" world), the Unconscious, but also and equally urgently to *change* life, to revolutionize not only human consciousness by bringing about a new and juster counterbalancing of subjectivity and objectivity, but also by taking part actively in the struggle to overthrow the outworn, self-destructive form of society we were (-and still are!) living in.[16]

In Paris he made several new acquaintances, including Cyril Connolly, of whom he has spoken to me with noticeable warmth,[17] and visited the atelier of S.W. Hayter

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13 Ibid.
14 'Surrealism Resurveyed', op. cit. p.1.
15 'Francis Picabia: Funny Guy', op.cit., p.3.
16 Ibid.
17 His first visit to Paul Eluard's apartment in the rue Legendre ended with the French writer reading to him several of his favourite poems, among which was one by Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, also appreciated by Grigson. Ibid. p.41.

through whom he met the painter Julian Trevelyan (Gascoyne's long friendship with Hayter and Trevelyan dates from 1933),[18] and those of Max Ernst,[19] Zadkine, Tchelitchev, Veira da Silva and Jean Hélion.[20] He is convinced today that it must have been Grigson, one of the latter's principal admirers, who had urged him to visit the artist when in Paris, giving him Hélion's address. However, he returned home without having kept any written record of what he describes in the 'Introductory Notes' to ***Collected Poems 1988*** as 'a momentous first encounter'.[21]

Summarizing this first trip to France in his first letter to Benjamin Fondane some four years later in 1937, Gascoyne would write, 'I met some of the frequenters of Montparnasse, artists like Max Ernst, Dalí, and others. For me it was a heady adolescent ferment of ideas, ambitions, poetry, sexual experiences, all of which now seem to me quite unreal [...] Surrealism really seemed to be the bomb which could break open to me this dull mediocre world.'[22] In December, he took back with him to England a gouache by Ernst, 'Oiseau en forêt' for which he paid 500f; he has referred in his talk on Picabia to 'the works Max Ernst showed me when I was sent by Jeanne Bucher to see him in his

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[18] Trevelyan studied at Hayter's workshop in Paris from 1931 to 1934; he introduced Gascoyne to Veira da Silva in 1933. He was one of twenty artists represented in the International Exhibition of Surrealism in 1936, and 'the following year,' as Gascoyne explained in his obituary for Trevelyan in *The Independent,* 14 July 1988, 'he was one of the principal instigators of the Exhibition of Surrealist Objects and Poems at the New London Gallery, which he opened at midnight disguised as a blind explorer.'

Bill Hayter, British painter and engraver, founded Atelier 17 (the name was proposed by Trevelyan) in 1933 in Paris (later in New York, 1941-55) for teaching and research into the techniques of print-making and gravure. Among those artists attracted to his workshop were Braque, Léger, Picasso, Miró, Ernst, Dalí, Masson, Tanguy, Giacometti, Ubac, Buckland-White, Trevelyan, and Jackson Pollock, de Kooning, Rothko, Mattá, Le Corbusier, Chagall, Motherwell, Lipchitz in New York. Although many of the leading Surrealists could be counted among his friends (his friendship with Paul Eluard began in 1933 and lasted until the poet's death in 1952), and he exhibited with them in Paris in 1933, in London and in 'Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism' at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1936, his was not an active participation as he was never fully committed to the movement. Hayter was to write later in *New Ways of Gravure* (revised edition: New York, 1981): 'the source of the material of all my works is unconscious or automatic' (p.132), and this explains the nature of his affinity with the Surrealists. His name was carefully omitted from all official Surrealist documents after Eluard, accused of malignant Stalinism, was expelled from the movement by Breton who ordered that no good Surrealist should speak to him again. Hayter said openly that he'd continue to see Eluard as his friends remained his friends whatever they might do. In 1939, Eluard dedicated a poem, 'Facile Proie', to Hayter; it was published that year with the latter's eight accompanying prints.

[19] Gascoyne told me in 1994 that he didn't think that Ernst's French was very good in those days. The artist showed him his painting 'Pietà, or Revolution by Night'.

[20] Gascoyne can clearly recall Hélion's 'brilliant conversation and [...] the austere abstractions he was producing at that time, as harmoniously architectured as the pictorial spaces of Poussin.' Ibid. p.39.

[21] Op. cit., p.xiv. Further citings as (*INCP*).

[22] David Gascoyne, 'Meetings with Benjamin Fondane', in Eddie Linden (ed.), *Aquarius* 17/18 (1986-7), p.24. The letter is dated 24.7.37.

rue des Plantes studio'.[23] In addition, he had bought copies of recent collections by Breton and Eluard, including *L'immaculée conception*, Péret and Tzara from the Jose Corti bookshop in Montmartre, though he had not then made initial personal contact with any of the representative writers of the Surrealist group.[24]

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Surrealism did not begin to make any noticeable impact in Britain until some ten years after Breton's first *Manifesto* in 1924. The received view is that Surrealism came into vogue in England in 1936, and this is clearly a reference to the general public awareness following the opening of the International Surrealist Exhibition in London in June which attracted more than 22,000 visitors and a hostile response from some sections of the press, as well as to Surrealist production in literature and art. However, it is a fact that British Surrealism asserted itself in writing before developing through painting.[25] In *Lions and Shadows* (1938) Christopher Isherwood recalls evening sessions with Edward Upward in the late twenties when they practised '"automatic writing" [...] nothing to do with spiritualism',[26] and he quotes an example from Upward upon which his friend 'Chalmers' would draw some ten years later in *Journey to the Border:* 'Rubber statuary in gardens of ice-cream roses, bearing every imprint of foot and belly.'[27] Isherwood also discusses the alternative world, 'the Other Town', discovered by himself and Upward in the creation of their Mortmere fantasies between 1924 and 1927. 'I use the term "Surrealism",' says Isherwood, 'simply for the purpose of explanation: we had, of course, no idea that a Surrealist movement already existed on the Continent.'

This may have been the case for Isherwood and Upward in 1928, though the readers of *Lions and Shadows* are warned that this book 'is not even entirely "true"', but it certainly was not the experience of other English writers and artists of that time. In

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[23] Op. cit., p.3.
[24] Gascoyne, 'Introductory Notes', op. cit., pp.xiv-xv. Jeanne Bucher's gallery was in Montparnasse.
[25] Michel Rémy, 'Surrealism's Vertiginous Descent on Britain', in *Surrealism in Britain in the Thirties: Angels of Anarchy and Machines for Making Clouds*, catalogue for the exhibition at the Leeds City Art Galleries, 1986, (eds.) A. Robertson, M. Rémy, M. Gooding, T. Friedman, p.34. Further citings as (*SVDB*).
[26] Op. cit.p.43
[27] Ibid. p.170

November 1928, *The Cambridge Review* contained one of the first historical accounts of Surrealism and the following summer the American Edouard Roditi, published his manifesto, 'The New Reality', in *The Oxford Outlook.* David Gascoyne was 13 years old in 1929 when the June issue of *Variétés* displayed a Surrealist map of an imaginary but desirable world on which, understandably, England did not appear. In January 1930, Man Ray's film *Le Mystère du Château de Dé* was shown by the London Film Society, and in June the Cambridge Group 'Experiment' contributed to *transition*, which included a piece by Julian Trevelyan on 'Dreams'. In September 1932, André Breton was guest-editor of a special 'Surrealist number' of the review *This Quarter* which offered a representative selection of prose and poetry in English translation together with drawings, by the French and Belgian Surrealists. In December there was an explanatory article on Surrealism in *Scrutiny* by Henri Fluchère. It was followed two months later by Charles Madge's piece, 'Surrealism for the English'.[28] The next year, Hugh Sykes Davies's 'Homer and Vico' and Madge's review 'The Meaning of Surrealism' were in numbers 8 and 10 of *New Verse.*[29] Gascoyne's article, 'French Poetry of Today' appeared in *Everyman* in August 1934[30] by which time he had contributed eleven pieces as art critic to *The New English Weekly.* It was during this period that he had become fully aware that his 'sexual preferences were fundamentally ambiguous', and as he writes in the unpublished autobiographical piece, 'Eyes in the Back of The Head', 'the problem of bisexuality that was to beset me from adolescence onwards [...] became the blight of my life.' [31]

For Roy Fuller, 'Surrealism arrived at about 1935 imported by an almost one-man firm, the precociously brilliant David Gascoyne',[32] but in his first collection at 16, ***Roman Balcony and other poems*** (1932), there are examples of proto-Surrealism in five of the poems, as well as strong echoes of the early T.S. Eliot of 'Preludes' and 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night'.[33] In addition, Gascoyne had already produced Surrealist verse and

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[28] *New Verse*, No.6 (December 1933), pp.14-18.

[29] Davies, op. cit. (April 1934), pp.12-18; Madge, op. cit., review of Georges Hugnet (ed.), *Petite anthologie poétique du surréalisme* (August 1934), pp.13-15.

[30] pp.234 and 251.

[31] A photocopy of the MS dated 14.XII.81 is in this writer's possession. Again, I am very grateful to Alan Clodd.

[32] 'Poetic Memories of the Thirties' in *Professors & Gods, Last Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (London: André Deutsch, 1973).

[33] 'Exhaustion', 'An Unfolding of Tapestry', 'Seaside Tragedy', 'Psychological Fragment', 'Prison'.

translations through 1933 and 1934, in the *New English Weekly*, *New Verse*, *The Bookman* and *The New Republic.* His friend, Dylan Thomas, wrote mischievously to Stephen Spender in late March of 1934 about some poems by Gascoyne he had recently seen: 'I saw a geometrical effort of his [a translation] in one *New Verse*, and also a poem in which he boasted of the ocarina in his belly. Is he much subtler or much more absurd than I imagine?'[34]

However, 1935 was to be a significant year. Back in Paris in 1935 Gascoyne was researching the book he had persuaded his publishers, Cobden-Sanderson, to commission him to write on Surrealism 'which for some time already had been for me the most exciting of all contemporary movements'.[35] He had returned to France specially to meet Breton and the Surrealist group, in order to collect from them material to document the book which was to appear that autumn under the title ***A Short Survey of Surrealism.*** [36]

> One of the chapters of my potted history of Surrealism was to be devoted to Dada, and I set out to collect as much information on the subject as I could. Among those who were particularly helpful in this respect were Eluard and Georges Hugnet. Eluard gave me some numbers of his by then already exceedingly rare series of *Proverbes* pamphlets,[37] and other dadaist ephemera; Georges Hugnet, ten years my senior in 1935, was nevertheless too young to have participated in the heyday of Dada, but was engaged in producing one of his several historical studies of the movement which denied that it was a movement and was a great help in providing me with dadaist data and documentation.[38]

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[34] In *Dylan Thomas: The Collected Letters*, (ed.) Paul Ferris (J.M. Dent 1985), p.105. Gascoyne told me in 1994: 'Dylan was a natural Surrealist. He hung a kipper on a painting at the International Surrealist Exhibition in 1936.' But the Welshman always disputed any suggestion that the word 'Surrealist' could be applied to his poetry. Thomas believed the Surrealist movement to be 'a purposely unreasonable experiment inimical to poetry,' as he put it in a letter to Richard Church on 9th December 1935.

[35] 'Surrealism Resurveyed', op. cit., p.1.

[36] 'Francis Picabia: Funny Guy', op. cit., p.3.

[37] Published in 1925, 152 of them, in collaboration with Benjamin Péret.

[38] 'Surrealism Resurveyed', p.4. Gascoyne told me in a telephone conversation in 1995 that he saw Hugnet's *Petite Anthologie Poétique du Surréalisme* (Editions Jeanne Bucher, 1934), and may well have owned a copy of it. He 'visited Hugnet's apartment several times. Gertrude Stein was a great friend of Hugnet's.' Hugnet's *L'Esprit dada dans la peinture* - an important series of essays – was published in 1932 in *Cahiers d'Art,* Nos.1-2, 6-7, 8-10, and in 1934 in No.1-4. He contributed two essays to ***Fantastic Art Dada Surrealism*** (ed.) Alfred H. Barr Jr. (New York, MOMA, December 1936): 'Dada', pp.15-34, and 'In the light of Surrealism', pp.35-52, both translated by Margaret Scolari and both first published in *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, Vol.4, No.2-3, (Nov.-Dec. 1936). ***Surrealism***, (ed.) Herbert Read (Faber & Faber, July 1936) contains essays by Breton, Eluard, Hugh Sykes Davies and by Hugnet: '1870 to 1936', pp.187-251. Further citings as (*HRS*).

Gascoyne had already been in correspondence with Eluard, but his friend, S.W. (Bill) Hayter,[39] took him in the summer of that year to the rue Fontaine to meet Breton who made a great impression on him. Gascoyne has commented to me that he found Breton 'a very complex person, difficult to talk about. He was a born leader. If others [in the Surrealist group] had a strong personality, they had to leave. He was very peremptory, but in private, occasionally, two or three times I've had conversations with him when he was a very different character.' He would write in Chapter 4 of ***A Short Survey of Surrealism*** of 'a man of such strong will, of such steadfast adherence to his beliefs, that he is bound always to have more enemies than friends; [...] He has been accused, among other things, of tyrannical authoritativeness, attempted dictatorship, etc. This may or may not to some extent be true; but one thing is certain: that except for André Breton the Surrealist movement could never have existed, for it is as difficult to imagine it without him as it is to imagine psychoanalysis without Freud.'[40] On 24th March 1968, the BBC. Third Programme transmitted 'A Link Between Worlds: A Sketch of André Breton', produced for Douglas Cleverdon by Barbara Bray. Several months before, in June 1967, Ruthven Todd had interviewed Gascoyne by telephone about Breton. I have acquired the transcript of that conversation which includes some of Gascoyne's most interesting and revealing comments on the French writer, delivered spontaneously.[41] Gascoyne describes his first meeting with Breton as follows: 'As we went into the courtyard there was a large fierce dog barking at us, and I looked up and there was Breton standing on a balcony on the top floor looking down on us, very immobile and very mysterious-looking; and that was my first impression of him and I think I was [...] rather in awe of him [he was] slightly intimidating' (p.1). Later in the conversation he recalls the 'splendid leonine

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[39] In 1984, Hayter produced a large lithographic design printed in blue and white of Hephaestus and his net to accompany a broadside limited edition of Gascoyne's poem 'Variations on a Theme', published by Charles Seluzicki, (Portland, Oregon: Fine Books) in an edition of 170 copies in Spectrum and Castellar types on Stonehenge.

[40] Op.cit., 'The First Manifesto 1924', pp.57,58.

[41] The quotations which follow are taken from the original BBC. document, TLN25/DY155, H.58.X, 09.00-10.00, 29th June 1967, headed as follows: 'Transcribed from a telediphone recording by Sound Direction. ANDRE BRETON', pp.1-10, 2/2-2/7. The American bookdealer's short essay, 'Douglas Cleverdon and the Third Programme', mentions that the transcript of the interview between Todd and Gascoyne contains far more material than was used in the production script of the programme transmitted nearly nine months later. Ruthven Todd, a friend of Gascoyne's in the 30s and 40s, was a poet, editor, novelist and essayist, and John Lehmann's secretary at the Hogarth Press; for a short time in the 40s he worked on *Horizon*. His poems were published regularly during the 30s in periodicals such as *The Bookman*, *New Verse*, *Twentieth Century Verse*, *The Listener*, *Poetry* (London), his first collections in 1940 *Until Now*, and 1944 *The Acreage of the Heart*.

head' (pp.2-3). Todd wonders what it was that caused people to fall out with Breton or quarrel with him, and Gascoyne suggests, in a wonderfully apposite phrase, that it was chiefly because of 'the purity of his intransigence'. There was a 'definite party line, and people who didn't come up to the standard were called to the count'. Todd asks what prompted Gascoyne to drift away from Breton in the end. 'Well, I didn't "drift away" exactly. I was more or less excommunicated because Breton had the impression that I'd been converted simultaneously to the Communist Party and to the Catholic Church and this wasn't strictly true [...] I never got over it and [from] that time on I didn't feel in the group very much any more. I'd see individuals perhaps' (p.9). He has already commented that he had seen Breton on three different occasions since then. 'The last time I saw him not long before his death, I caught sight of him looking at Negro sculpture in a small gallery in one of the streets leading down to the Seine' (pp.2-3). Asked to assess the significance of Breton, Gascoyne says that 'looking back [...] what is important is the enormous amount of creative work that came from his stimulus - his influence on people'. He sees Breton as 'a great French writer. [...] He probably wouldn't like it said that he was primarily a great French stylist because, of course, he was far more concerned about the content of what he said than the way he said it; but I think that in a hundred years' time, it will probably be said of him that he was one of the great French writers, as a stylist, in twentieth-century literature.' (pp.2-4)

In the 'Afterword' to his ***Collected Journals*** he remarks on his ambivalent attitude towards 'Breton, the promulgator of edicts and indictments' (p.393). Much earlier, in an entry for 8.IX.37, he admits, 'at one time I had more admiration and respect for him than for almost any man living; then reacted against this rather excessive enthusiasm'(p.127).

Although he visited Paul and Nusch Eluard and saw René Crevel a fortnight before he committed suicide, Gascoyne was unable then to meet Tzara, Soupault or Desnos, because of certain exclusions or expulsions.[42] However, he spent several days with Dalí and Gala at their studio, dominated by the painting 'The Great Masturbator'.[43]

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[42] Duclos Interview, op. cit. pp.19-20.

[43] Dalí renamed the painting 'A Portrait of the Marquis De Sade' in honour of André Breton. See Meryle Secrest, *Salvador Dalí* (New York: E.P.Dutton, 1986), pp.139-40. Gascoyne's reward for translating the essay was 'a handsome example of Dalí's draughtsmanship [a calligraphic drawing of the horsemen of

He was employed by the Spanish artist on Eluard's recommendation to translate the twenty-five-page essay, *La Conquête de l'Irrationel.* [44] 'Every day for about a week I sat at a table in his rue Gauget studio wrestling with this task, with the aid of occasional explanations from the author or, more often, from Gala, whose French was much easier to understand. The room was full of objects, paintings and an easel was behind my back, but a long narrow mirror at my feet enabled me to observe whatever went on in it. Dalí in those days had not yet fully developed his magisterial later persona, though his moustache was already impressive, and at lunch the maid would regularly be sent out to find a replacement for the baguette of bread [Dalí had an obsession about bread], which was never sufficiently long. During the week I was there he had matters of business which kept him away from home, but whenever he had time to spare he would resume work on his current canvas. I was thus privileged,' recalls Gascoyne, 'to witness something of the outward calm frenzy with which he attacked the work in hand. Sometimes screwing a magnifying lens to one eye, sometimes using a brush with only three hairs, he became transformed into an intensely absorbed extension of his hand, completely oblivious of my presence or of any other distraction whatsoever.'[45]

Gascoyne was still staying with Dalí and Gala when they heard the terrible news about René Crevel. They had known that the poet was ill, but were not aware that it was a suicide attempt. Gala thought Crevel had been stricken by something contagious and wanted to make sure Dalí didn't catch it. 'We learned later,' Gascoyne told the biographer Meredith Etherington-Smith, 'that he was found in the bathroom with the gas tap for the hot water heater turned on full. He had pinned a little note to himself that said:

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death], as well as the cost of the fare I needed to return to England.' Typescript of his review of Tim McGirk, *Wicked Lady - Salvador Dalí's Muse* (London: Hutchinson, 1989).

[44] *Conquest of the Irrational*, an essay accompanying a series of reproductions in a booklet, was published that same year by the New York dealer Julien Levy on the occasion of Dalí's third visit to America. Levy had opened a gallery in the city in 1931, and exhibited the first Surrealist paintings and sculptures in 1932; over the next seventeen years he worked closely with de Chirico, Duchamp, Ernst, Man Ray, Arshile Gorky, Dalí and others. In 1936, he brought out *Surrealism* (Black Sun Press), an anthology of poetry and prose translated by various hands (Gascoyne's version of Georges Hugnet's 'A mail-coach overturns in the meadow' was included), with an introductory essay by Levy himself and reproductions of paintings, collages, photographs and sculptures. (Reprinted for the first time in 1995 by Da Capo, New York). It was this book which introduced the Americans to the continental movement, then twelve years old.

[45] Gascoyne's obituary notice for Dalí in *The Independent* (Tuesday 24 January 1989), p.11.

"Disgusted, Disgusted." When Dalí came back and told us - Gala was a hard woman - but she had tears in her eyes and so did he.'[46]

Six years after Roditi at eighteen published the first Surrealist manifesto in English, Gascoyne at nineteen produced his unilateral 'Premier Manifeste Anglais du Surréalisme' which appeared with no discernible response in this country, in June 1935 in the Paris review *Cahiers d'Art,* X.[47] It is described as a fragment, and although a note in that journal announced the future publication of the full manifesto, it was never completed. Many years later, in August 1991, he wrote in a letter to the publisher, Michael Thorp, 'I was introduced to Roditi in Paris when I must have been very young. We have at least three mutual friends. We have met of late only very occasionally. As I am often acclaimed for having introduced Surrealism to this country, I find Edouard Roditi very forbearing *à mon égard*, because it was really he who was the first to do so!'[48]

On 7th May 1935, prior to publication, Gascoyne had written to Man Ray, to clarify his own views about England and Surrealism: 'I think we can say that the development from dadaism to Surrealism was *dialectical* ...a new declaration of the rights of man...Surrealism is very much needed here in England.'[49] In the section of his Manifesto devoted to 'The Aims and Methods of Surrealism', he says, 'The fundamental goal of Surrealism is to abolish all formal distinction between dream and reality, between subjectivity and objectivity so that, out of the distinction of these old "antinomies", the future state of things for which all revolutionaries strive may thrust itself into clear view...'[50] In the *Stand* interview with Lucien Jenkins, Gascoyne made the point that:

> That was what appealed to me in Surrealism, the attempt to overcome the contradictions between all these aspects of reality [...] The Surrealists claimed to be based upon dialectics, and the whole idea of dialectics, as developed by Hegel particularly, is that in order to bring about synthesis you have to carry the opposites to extremes to bring

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[46] Meredith Etherington-Smith, *Dali: a Biography* (Sinclair-Stevenson, 1993), p.228. Gascoyne told Ruthven Todd in the telephone interview in June 1967 that Crevel was torn between his loyalty to Breton and to the Communist Party, 'and he had also been told that he was going to die of consumption' (p.2).

[47] It appeared with a translation into French of his poem 'Charity Week' by Paul Eluard.

[48] I am grateful for a photocopy of the original letter.

[49] This extract from Gascoyne's letter appears in Neil Baldwin, *Man Ray, American Artist* (New York: Da Capo, 1988). Gascoyne told me in February 1994 that Man Ray was 'one of the most warm and friendly, unjudgmental and undogmatic people I've met.' He recognized that the American had always been able to remain outside the arguments and struggles with the French Surrealist group.

[50] My translation.

> about a conjunction- this is alchemical as well as dialectic thought - the fusion or reconciliation, the final reconciliation if you like, is brought about by pushing things to extremes rather than by reconciling them in a superficial - insincere - way.[51]

The means employed by Surrealism to attain this goal [the abolition of opposites], he continues in the 'Manifeste', 'are, first and foremost, automatic writing and the experience of the nature of automatism. Surrealism is an instrument through which speaks a pure universal voice. The Surrealist texts only express thoughts about the original state, thoughts not shaped by reason or logic...'[52]

The final section, 'Surrealist Declarations', reads as follows:

1. complete agreement with the principles of Surrealism as set out for the first time by André Breton;
2. unreserved support for the historical materialism of Marx, Engels and Lenin;
3. in England a vast field of action in poetry, the plastic arts and philosophy is opening itself up to Surrealism;
4. an unremitting struggle against fascism and war, imperialism and nationalism, humanism, liberalism, idealism, anarchistic individualism, the theory of art for art's sake, religious fideism and, in general, against all doctrines that might seek to justify the perpetuation of capitalism.

Gascoyne's landmark book, ***A Short Survey of Surrealism***, with dust jacket in red and green designed by Max Ernst and a gilt design on the front cover by Yves Tanguy, was published in November 1935, a product of his intensive and extended research in Paris, interviewing Breton and other members of the Surrealist group. Twelve plates of Surrealist paintings and photographs, and translations by Gascoyne and by Ruthven Todd of Surrealist poems followed the author's main text. Almost thirty years later in a retrospective article written in Canada about Surrealism in England, George Woodcock, poet of the thirties and forties, referred to 'The pioneer of English Surrealism [...] David Gascoyne, who in 1935, as a boy of nineteen, published the first real exposition of the doctrine by an English writer - the brief and very clear little volume, ***A Short Survey of Surrealism***'. [53] The anonymous reviewer, 'Hastings', in *Left Review* (January 1936) welcomed Gascoyne's survey unequivocally: 'This book should be invaluable to anyone

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[51] Op. cit., p.22
[52] My translation here and of the section which follows.
[53] 'Elegy for Fur-Covered Motor Horns: Notes on Surrealism in England', in *Limbo* (February 1964), p.50.

who wishes to understand Surrealism [...] the subject is well handled, the continuity preserved, and the interest of the reader definitely held throughout the book. The illustrations are very well chosen.'[54] In his review for *The Criterion* (April 1936), Brian Coffey, Irish Modernist poet and translator, acknowledged that Gascoyne had 'given an accurate account of the series of events which constitute the public acts of this movement [Surrealism]. He writes with a great enthusiasm for his subject'.[55] For the anonymous writer in the *Times Literary Supplement* (4th January 1936) Gascoyne's was a 'most interesting book' and 'a rather meticulous historical treatment of his subject-matter'.[56] (Coffey, more direct, calls Gascoyne's exposition 'wordy'). However, contemporary critical response was not uniformly complimentary. Geoffrey Walton's waspish review in *Scrutiny* (March 1936) presented a dissenting voice. He claimed that Gascoyne's introduction, though longer, was less cogent and persuasive than M. Fluchère's article on the subject in that same periodical in December 1932. 'He [Gascoyne] fails in the primary object of his book: to convince one that Surrealism as a movement is worthy of close attention'.[57] The carping note was pursued: 'Mr Gascoyne makes no effort to judge the results of Surrealist creation critically'.[58] Coffey articulated a similar view: 'He seven-leagues happily over fifteen years of history, forgetting that the presentation of facts is not equivalent to the explanation of these facts.' Yet at the same time, he is ready to concede that the work 'is valuable in as much as no other history of Surrealism exists in English'.[59]

What we seem to have here is a case of wishful thinking, where a subjective response outweighs an objective appraisal. It hardly seems appropriate - or just - to criticize an author for the very omission he has signalled with manifest clarity in his introduction: 'In the pages that follow I intend to treat the subject by employing a roughly chronological order; [...] this book is intended to serve as an introduction to Surrealism *rather than to be a work of criticism*' (my italics).[60] Gascoyne aimed to provide the first

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[54] Op. cit., Vol.2, No.4, p.186.
[55] Op. cit., Vol.XV, No.60, p.507. Coffey devotes only eleven lines to Gascoyne's study in a long review of five and a half pages (506-511) which focuses on a detailed critique of André Breton's *Position Politique du Surréalisme.*
[56] Op. cit., p.10.
[57] Op. cit., Vol.IV, No.4, p.452.
[58] Ibid. p.453.
[59] Op. cit., ibid.
[60] ***A Short Survey of Surrealism***, pp.xiii-xiv.

full-length and accessible historical account of the movement, together necessarily with a symposium of translated texts and photographs. The *Times Literary Supplement* critic pointed out (his 'only complaint') that he [Gascoyne] had 'chosen quite deliberately, to dwell on the history of Surrealism rather than on its doctrines'.[61] Precisely: that is, to write a particular kind of book, announced in its title, a 'survey', the first of its kind which has stood the test of time and which, some sixty years later, continues to be included in the references and bibliographies of contemporary critical studies of Surrealism and histories of modern art. To offer at the same time in 1935 a detailed exegetical treatment of its subject, would have been to write another kind of book altogether; one from which, given the publishers' constraints, it is more than likely that the translations and plates would have been absent.[62]

Cyril Connolly's view was very different from those expressed in *Scrutiny* and *The Criterion*. 'One of the prettiest books of the year,' he announced blithely in *The New Statesman and Nation* (December 1935) under the headline 'It's [Surrealism] Got Here At Last!' His review ends, 'The illustrations are well-chosen, the translations excellent,' and significantly, 'the subject has scarcely been touched upon in English, and the book should prove a pleasure to all who enjoy provocative reading'.[63]

Gascoyne also completed his translation of Breton's *Qu'est-ce que le Surréalisme?* which Faber & Faber were to bring out the following year when England was placed incontrovertibly on the Surrealist map.

In January, 1936, his texts of simulated madness, 'The Great Day' were printed in the short-lived magazine *Janus*; Hugh Sykes Davies and Roger Roughton wrote on Surrealism in *New Verse* and *The Criterion* respectively. In May, Gascoyne's essay 'Poetry - Reality' came out in *The Literary Review* [64] and David Archer's Parton Press published ***Man's Life is this Meat.*** Roughton's *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* issued its 'Double Surrealist number' in June, with poems by Gascoyne together with

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61 Op. cit., ibid.

62 Kathleen Raine has told me that in 1935 it was just this – the fact that the survey included both plates and translations – that made it so exciting

63 Op. cit. (December 14), p.946.

64 Op. cit. I,3, pp.6-8.

translations of the French poets, to coincide with the opening of the International Surrealist Exhibition at the New Burlington Galleries in London. Roland Penrose describes in his *Scrapbook, 1900-1981* how, 'Centred round Herbert Read, [...] a small group came to life which included Humphrey Jennings, Henry Moore, Paul Nash, Hugh Sykes Davies, Eileen Agar, all stimulated by the visionary presence of the young David.'[65] Also in June, Faber & Faber published *Surrealism* edited by Herbert Read.[66] and Gascoyne's translation, *What is Surrealism?* (Breton's original had been issued in Brussels in 1934) was presented in a modified version. Gascoyne told Ruthven Todd that he, not Breton, had made the selection for translation from the collection of texts that make up the long essay.[67] Breton, reportedly, was unhappy about the amended text, 'specially prepared,' announced Faber on the inside of the dustwrapper, 'for the occasion of the first International Surrealist Exhibition to be held in London'. Gascoyne was one of the organizing committee, along with Roland Penrose, Herbert Read, E.L.T. Mesens, Man Ray, Breton, Eluard and Hugnet. He points to Penrose as 'the moving spirit', and comments to Todd (who agrees) that the exhibition took place 'during an extremely hot summer. The gallery was absolutely packed for the day of the opening and, as far as I remember, Breton had to stand on a chair. I remember that I was assistant secretary [...] Herbert Read had pulled me in, I think.'[68] Most of the leading continental Surrealist artists and writers were in attendance (Magritte wasn't) at the Burlington Galleries. Roland Penrose and others hoped that the Exhibition would 'make clear to Londoners that there was a revelation awaiting. It could release them from the constipation of logic which conventional public-school mentality had brought upon them'.[69] That same month, Roughton brought out *A Bunch of Carrots* (re-issued after censorship problems as *Remove Your Hat*), a collection of translations by Gascoyne and Humphrey Jennings of Benjamin Péret's poems, and July saw the publication of *Thorns of Thunder*,[70] translations of Paul Eluard's verse by Gascoyne and others, and an eight page supplement on Surrealism in *Left Review*. In November, Ezra Pound with his 'The Coward Surrealists', and the editor

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65 Op. cit. (London: Thames & Hudson, 1981), p.60.
66 With essays by Georges Hugnet, Breton, Sykes Davies and Paul Eluard.
67 Op.cit., p.1.
68 Op.cit., p.5.
69 *Scrapbook 1900-1981*, ibid.
70 (Europa Press, 1936), (ed.) George Reavey.

with his riposte, 'Eyewash, Do You?: A Reply to Mr Pound', fired broadsides at each other on the pages of *Contemporary Poetry and Prose.*[71].

George Woodcock makes a challenging but, I think, valid assessment of Surrealist writing in this country in comparison with the vibrant Continental movement which preceded it by a decade: 'In France Surrealism was an organized church, complete with a Pope, André Breton, who claimed infallibility [...]. And in England it became a conventicle, small in numbers, but sustained by the mildly fanatical British love of dissent [...]'.[72]

It became customary in the thirties for some critics and reviewers, such as Empson, Hugh Porteus, Frederic Prokosch and Malcolm Cowley to describe W.H. Auden, or aspects of his early work, as quasi-Surrealist.[73] Auden did not visit the Surrealist Exhibition, but he was 'present' at the Surrealist Objects & Poems exhibition in November 1937 as an objet trouvé. His essay, 'Honest Doubt' appeared in 1936 in the June-July number of *New Verse*,[74] an enquiry into 'the aesthetic and political implications of Surrealism'. His hostile attitude bears some scrutiny, particularly in the context of his characterization of the thirties as 'a low dishonest decade'. The anonymous signature, J.(ohn) B.(ull) to the *New Verse* essay, might almost suggest that Auden's approach is that of the patriot saving his country and his culture from infestation by an alien ideology. We might wonder, too, whether the implication of his enquiry, 'Honest Doubt', is that there is something fundamentally dishonest about the doctrine and technique of Surrealist writing and art. Edward Mendelson comments that Surrealism was 'the object of

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[71] No.7., (ed.) Roughton.

[72] Op. cit. p.49.

[73] W.Empson: 'A Note on W.H. Auden's *Paid on Both Sides*' in *Experiment* 7 (spring 1931), pp.60-1; H.G. Porteus, 'W.H. Auden', *Twentieth Century* 4, (February 1933), pp. 14-16; Prokosch in 'Twelve Comments on Auden', *New Verse* 26-7, (November 1937), p.24. See David Pascoe, *Auden's Surrealism* in *W.H. Auden, The Language of Learning and the Language of Love,* Auden Studies 2 (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1994), pp.144-5.

[74] No.21, pp.14-16. Reprinted in *W.H. Auden: Prose 1926-1938*, Vol.1 (ed.) Edward Mendelson (Faber & Faber, 1996), p.135. (135-7). Auden examines the use of unconscious imagery and the 'eternally changing country of dreams', and then considers the revolutionary writer and his relation to 'profoundly rational' communism and psychoanalysis. The following year in *New Verse*, May 1937, Auden wrote a very favourable review of Christopher Caudwell's *Illusion and Reality.* However, Caudwell accuses 'the three English poets [Auden, Spender, Day Lewis] most clearly associated with the revolutionary movement' of 'unconscious *dishonesty*' [my emphasis] in their art, 'exploiting the revolution' for their own ends. *Illusion and Reality*, 1937, 1946, and new edition (Lawrence & Wishart, 1977), p.315.

[Auden's] repeated attacks in 1936 [...] the practice and theory [of which] he regarded as hypocritical and false'.[75] It was Auden's 'bête noire'. Apart from the word 'honest' in the title, 'genuine' and 'true' are each used twice in the course of his argument which, however, does pose a number of 'very elementary' (his words) but valid questions, with some acuity. 'My only knowledge of Surrealism,' writes Auden in 1936, 'is derived from Mr Gascoyne's books, a few French writers like Breton and Aragon, some paintings of Dalí, Ernst, and others, and from the pages of The Minotaur [sic]. I have never met a Surrealist, so my ideas of the movement may be completely misconceived'.[76]

Dennis Egan wrote penetratingly in 1995: 'Gascoyne has been unfairly stigmatized as a Surrealist; though his 1936 collection of Surrealist poems ***Man's Life is This Meat*** is today a collector's item, the essential Gascoyne is rooted in spirituality. His search is directed toward an inward revolution, not the outward political revolution that was so fashionable at the time'.[77] While Egan's assertion holds true so far as the overriding importance of the spiritual element in the later thirties and forties poetry, and the work that followed is concerned, his view is not wholly in accord with Gascoyne's then current poetic credo and expression of intent evinced in the essay 'Poetry - Reality', published in the *Literary Review* in May.[78] His interest in and commitment to left-wing politics (i.e. 'outward political revolution') as a poet are abundantly clear. He had already referred to himself as 'an English poet with continually growing political convictions' in 1934 in his response to the *New Verse* Questionnaire.[79] On September 22nd 1936, Gascoyne recorded the first entry in the Journal he would keep for the next six years; and it was at this time that he joined the Communist Party: 'I belonged to a cell in Twickenham and went to a few meetings there [...] I sold *The Daily Worker* outside the bus station in

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[75] Mendelson, *Early Auden* (Faber & Faber, 1981), p.208.

[76] Contemporary readers might certainly have inferred this from Auden's apparent lack of real knowledge and understanding of the doctrine of the movement in his essay 'Psychology and Art' published the previous year, in *The Arts Today*, (ed.) Geoffrey Grigson, (Lane 1935): 'Even the most Surrealistic writing of Mr. James Joyce's latest prose shows every sign of being non-automatic or extremely carefully worked over.'(p.58). Writing to Michael Roberts late in September 1936, Auden commented, 'Really Surrealism at this time of day is a cough drop I can't swallow,' and early in December he wrote Professor E.R. Dodds about his proposed journey to Spain to join the International Brigade. '[...] I feel I ought to go; but O I do hope there are not too many Surrealists there.' (Quoted in Richard Davenport-Hines, *Auden* (Heinemann, 1995), p.163.

[77] *The Independent on Sunday*, 12 February 1995, p.30).

[78] I have transcribed the article from the rough draft in Notebook Add.56040 in the British Library (no pagination).

[79] No.11 (October), p.12.

Hounslow on a few occasions. I think I really believed in it.'[80] At the beginning of October he went with Emily Coleman to the Anti-Mosley demonstration: 'One felt an almost revolutionary tension.' Then a week later he was walking to Tower Hill, helping to carry the Twickenham Communist Branch's banner in another Anti-Fascist procession. 'Crowds of hysterical shopgirls, raw youths yelled at us from the pavement, almost all the way along the route. We were spat on. Mosley had succeeded in identifying Communism and Jews in the minds of the most irresponsible section of the East-End population.'[81] His politicization was well under way.

In 'Poetry - Reality' he develops his argument that the revolutionary political attitude of the Surrealists, no 'passing mood of intellectual revolt', was inescapably bound up with their attitude to poetry: 'As long ago as 1925, the Surrealist poets (and artists) were among the signatories of the manifesto entitled *La Révolution d'Abord et Toujours*, in which the following words occurred: "Nous ne sommes pas des utopistes: cette Révolution nous ne la concevons que sous sa forme sociale. S'il existe...de l'individu." Remember,' continues Gascoyne, 'this was some years before the appearance of the so-called "left-wing" English poets - Auden, Spender, Day Lewis [...].' Implicit in the revolt and on-going struggle, is the offensive they have launched against reality. Here, he is responding to an article published in the previous issue: 'No, it really cannot be said that because certain poems are not about strikes, factories, armaments - or whatever, the authors of such poems are therefore "unwilling or unable really to face the concrete facts of the world in which they live". The truth is that rather than constituting a refuge or retreat from reality, such poems are written in opposition to, or in defence of, the existing conception of the real. 'An attempted definition of poetry from the point of view of a Surrealist poet is the following, by Paul Eluard: "Caprice, contradiction, violence, - they are poetry; in other words, poetry is a perpetual struggle, life's very principle, the queen of unrest".'

Gascoyne then assumes a more overtly political tone:

> If this is so, how then can poetry ever be reconciled with a system, one of whose chief aims is to make men passive, docile and smug? That is what I mean when I say that Surrealist poetry constitutes not a *retreat*

[80] Lucien Jenkins interview, op. cit., pp.22-3.
[81] ***Collected Journals***, op. cit., pp.22, 27.

> from but an *assault* on the current conception of reality. The poet whose work is devoted to achieving a more complete freedom for the imagination, to discovering the complicated, startling and poetic relationships that exist between all *things* (images), cannot be indifferent to the social system in which he lives, a social system doing everything in its power to thwart him in his endeavour to create a richer and more lively universe - not for himself alone, but for everyone who has eyes to read and imagination to comprehend with (no pag.).

In Gascoyne's terms, the imaginatively inventive poet is 'the iconoclast par excellence. The unshackled imagination, expressed via poetry, is opposed to all fixity of forms, all permanent stability of concepts, all stereotyping of images'.

Much of what Gascoyne wrote here was subsumed in his talk on Surrealism and poetry to the Oxford Union, 'The Future of the Lyrical Imagination', delivered on his return from Spain in December 1936. Both pieces indicate unequivocally Gascoyne's mind-set and represent his clear view of the state of poetry, and of the poet's mission halfway through the decade, in language which has an unmistakable Marxist inflection. Apart from the recurrence of particular words and phrases, 'bourgeois', 'revolutionary', 'capitalist', 'worker', 'exploitative system', 'the State', 'suppression', 'post-revolutionary society', 'counter-revolutionary', 'ideological', 'dialectical materialism', 'proletarian culture', his essay, 'Poetry - Reality' had concluded thus: 'A considerable part of Marx's *Capital* is devoted to demonstrating how the transformation of quality into quantity is brought about, and vice versa. Can this law be equally applied to poetry as to economics? I believe it can. The revolution has no need of poetry, but poetry has great need of the revolution.' Kathleen Raine, Gascoyne's contemporary from the thirties and friend and champion of several decades since, read his talk for the first time in February 1998 after I had sent her a word-processed copy. In her reply of 20th February she writes: 'The Oxford paper will be of great interest in the context of the whole collection of papers [she is referring to the forthcoming ***Selected Prose 1934-1996*** to which she has written the Introduction] but it is really too naive and bespattered with Communist Party clichés [...] and does not represent David's mature thought.'

The expository opening paragraphs of his Oxford talk are devoted to what the speaker clearly felt was a very necessary preliminary statement. He locates two completely different worlds locked into 'the fiercest conflict'. They are identified as

'exploitative capitalism fast becoming Fascism', and 'Communism': on one hand, 'the world of metaphysics, idealism, religion, rationalization, the morality of castration and restraint, ego-inflation and mediocrity'; on the other, 'the world of dialectical super-materialism, the liberation of man, new perspectives, physical delight, profound belief in the future, endless possibilities'.[82] He goes on to quote Eluard to demonstrate the relationship of poetry and of poets to this 'gigantic' conflict: 'All poets worthy of the name are fighting the system of exploitation side by side with the workers. For true poetry is the camp of those who are fighting for the deliverance of Man' (*FLI*, ibid.).

With regard to the revolutionary element he identifies, Gascoyne's assertion that, without the loss of its anarchistic autonomy, Surrealism was an artistic revolution supporting the proletarian revolution, echoes the argument expressed by the communist Claude Cahun, poet, artist, photographer and essayist, in her pamphlet of 1934, *Les Paris Sont Ouverts*. She is quoted by Breton in his *Qu'est-ce que le Surréalisme?* to illustrate and reinforce his own position formulated earlier in his *Misère de la Poésie* (1932): 'The most revolutionary experiment in poetry under the capitalist régime having been incontestably for France and perhaps for Europe, the dadaist-Surrealist experiment, in that it has tended to destroy all the myths about art that for centuries have permitted the ideologic as well as economic exploitation of painting, of sculpture, of literature, etc. [...] this experience can and should serve the cause of the liberation of the proletariat.'[83]

Breton talked of the conflict between 'man's conscious thought and his lyrical expression, a conflict sufficient to impassion to the highest degree the poetic drama in

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[82] This was an unpublished document, copied by hand by Alan Clodd from one of the Notebooks in the British Library (no pagination), All quotations are from its first publication in ***David Gascoyne: Selected Prose 1934-1996***, (ed.) by Roger Scott (Enitharmon Press, 1998), p.25. Further citings as (*FLI*).

[83] Cahun quoted in ***A Short Survey of Surrealism***, op. cit., pp.121-2, and in Gascoyne's translation of Breton's *What is Surrealism?*, pp.88-9. I have seen a copy of ***Man's Life is This Meat*** inscribed to Claude Cahun by Gascoyne, and it is interesting to note that both he and Breton, understandably like many others, assumed that Cahun was male. In her self-portraits shown in 1995 at the ICA exhibition, 'Mise en Scène' in London, which I visited, Cahun clearly demonstrates her liberated bi-sexuality, and the androgyny she cultivated made her 'the only woman to have effected such transgressive acts in the early century', according to the unnamed writer of the pamphlet accompanying the display of photographs.

which we are the actors'.[84] Gascoyne took up this concept of man's lyrical expression. Lyricism, lyrical thought, the lyrical impulse, he defined as

> nothing more or less than *uncontrolled thought.* Or rather, perhaps, thought that escapes from the conscious control of the reason and proceeds on its own way and of its own impulse, so that the poet is afterwards surprised to find what he has written. And that, in the end, is what the idea of "inspiration" (the Poet-Muse relationship) boils down to. In the light of the discoveries of modern psychoanalysis, there is really no mystery about it at all (*FLI*, p.26).[85]

One of the most interesting concepts he develops (using by way of illustration two poems, one each by Dylan Thomas and Julian Bell), is that of 'poetry - activity-of-mind', the lyrical poetry that is the product of uncontrolled thought (represented by Thomas), and 'poetry - means-of-expression', which has little in common with 'descriptive, moralistic or propaganda poetry' (Bell). To emphasize the superiority *as poetry* of 'poetry - activity-of-mind', the 'true end towards which all the most vital poetry of the past has been progressing, and [which] provides the largest number of possibilities for the future - that is to say for *post-revolutionary society*' (*FLI*, p.27), he read two groups of poems, the first comprising work by Clifford Dyment, Kenneth Allott and Ruthven Todd, and the second work by Eluard, Benjamin Péret and André Breton.

Fired at twenty with Marxian zeal, he argued that lyrical poetry is revolutionary in that 'all true living poetry is today in a certain sense revolutionary. It is difficult to imagine a state of society more hostile to the very existence of poetry than 20th century capitalist society. Everything under capitalism now is the most violent contradiction to poetry' (*FLI*, ibid.). What is the poet to do who believes that the real future of poetry lies in 'poetry - activity-of-mind' rather than with 'poetry - means-of-expression?' he asks.

> I believe that he must continue his researches on the one hand, and do all he can to fight for the revolution and against reaction on the other. If he does not take part in the political struggle he becomes an empty and meaningless figure, if he does not carry on the tradition of 'poetry -

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[84] *What is Surrealism?*, op. cit.p.88. Breton believed that Louis Aragon had failed in his attempt to resolve this conflict 'elementarily'.

[85] A year earlier, Louis MacNeice had shown his disdain for Surrealism in his contributory essay, 'Poetry', to *The Arts Today*, edited by Geoffrey Grigson (Lane, 1935), p.58: '[...] if they [the Surrealists] could remain passive they might be artists but they are too deliberately wire-pulling their reflexes; they have made of their unconscious a kind of political platform. If you want to give your unconscious a chance you must keep your eye on something else.'

> activity-of-mind', the future society may be deprived of the highest development of the highest of all the arts (*FLI*, pp.33-4).

If the views of the youthful writer in his formative years were, to some extent derivative, he had been nevertheless rationalizing and shaping an enthusiastic and committed response to his reading of and research into Surrealist doctrine, and to his new-found political awareness.

The title of Gascoyne's new collection, ***Man's Life is This Meat,***[86] emerged as he has explained in his 'Introductory Notes' to the ***Collected Poems, 1988***, from a meeting with Geoffrey Grigson, during which the latter 'produced a sample-book of printers' type-faces, which when opened at random showed the words "man's life is" in one sort of type at the end of the bottom line on the left-hand page, and "this meat" in a different type of lettering at the beginning of the top line of the page opposite.' Gascoyne comments that this seemed at the time an ideal title, 'an example of what the Surrealists described as "objective hazard".'[87] It might be added that the wording of the title closely resembles the kind of composition used by the French Surrealists in their invented game, *le cadavre esquis* ('the exquisite corpse'), where each person in a group provides a word on the basis of the suggestion of previous words contributed. A note on page 4 explains that 'With the exception of Nos.1-6, the poems in this collection are Surrealist poems. Gascoyne's translation of Eluard, ':

> Of course I hate the reign of the bourgeois
> The reign of cops and priests
> But I hate still more the man who does not hate it
> As I do
> With all his might
>
> I spit in the face of that despicable man
> Who does not of all my poems prefer this *Critique of Poetry*
>
> ('Critique of Poetry')

precedes the Contents page.

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[86] He gave a copy to Hugnet, inscribed 'à Georges Hugnet, grand amitié toujours, David Gascoyne, October 15th 1936.' On the rear inside blank page he handwrote a poem , 'Eau Sifflée'. This copy is part of the Gabrielle Keiller Collection now in the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, and the poem was first published in 1992 in *Poésie 92*, No.41(Paris).

[87] (*INCP*), p.xv.

It is André Breton's preface to Max Ernst's *La Femme 100 Têtes* (1929) that grants us access not only to Ernst's vision of the world but also to Surrealism and Surrealist poetry. 'Surreality,' writes Breton, 'depends on our wish for a complete disorientation of everything,' so that an image like Rimbaud's 'drawing room at the bottom of a lake' is considered as 'an actual reality' rather than 'a metaphorical scene:

> [...] it will be increasingly apparent that every drawing room has come down to 'the bottom of a lake' and this, we must insist, with its chandeliers of fishes, its gildings of stars, its dances of grass, its bottom of mud, and its costumes of reflections [...].[88]

Gascoyne's introduction to his ***A Short Survey of Surrealism***, which in its turn provides an entry to Surrealist poetry as well as to painting, begins not unsurprisingly with echoes of Breton's prose style in the first *Manifesto*:

> Confined from early childhood in a world that almost everything he ever hears or reads will tell him is the one and only 'real' world, and that, as almost no one, on the contrary, will point to him, is a prison, man - l'homme moyen sensuel [...] is forever barred except in sleep from that other plane of existence where stones fall upwards and the sun shines by night, if it chooses, and where even the trees talk freely with the statues that have come down for ever from their pedestals.[89]

Edouard Roditi's 'new reality' in his 'First English and American Surrealist Manifesto' is:

> the reality of dreams and of dark rooms filled with the buzzing light of ultra-violet rays; it is the reality of red sunsets on dark seas, where the whales call to their mates in the tones of an apocalyptic primadonna; the reality of advertisements read backwards and of umbrellas blown away by the wind to mysterious horizons beyond the house-tops; the reality of walking-sticks that become snakes and snakes that become hair and hair that rises vertically towards the sun so as to form new rays from the earth to the sun. Birds are suspended from the sun by the long golden chains of their burning songs; birds dream of disappointed experience and sing in their sleep when they hear of the death of the word LOVE. [...]
>
> The new reality, the new muse, the new state of mind ignore technique because it is technique. They appear only to the poet whose knowledge of technique is sufficient.'[90]

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[88] Quoted in Marcel Jean (ed.), *The Autobiography of Surrealism* : Documents of 20th Century Art (New York: Viking Press, 1980), p.208.
[89] Op. cit. (London: Cobden-Sanderson 1935), p.ix.
[90] Op. cit. p.52.

Georges Hugnet's comments in his long essay, '1870-1936', in *Surrealism* represent a useful attempt to characterize Surrealist poetry which is 'in opposition to the usual conception of poetry' (p.214). Surrealist poetry, he suggests, can be 'roughly divided into the automatic text, the dream narrative, and the poem properly so called' (*HRS*, p.214).

I asked Gascoyne about the experience of 'automatic' writing. 'In my Surrealist phase,' he said, 'I tried to make my mind a blank and wrote down whatever came into my head. It's like a session of psychoanalysis - the result will be typical of you - people have clusters of images in their minds and they come out this way - clusters of words and images and associations - what comes out is a unique combination of new words and images. Surrealist writing is the cultivation of spontaneity.'[91] Gascoyne's 1935 review in the December issue of *New Verse* of Paul Eluard's most recent poems, *Facile* (illustrated by Man Ray), has some relevance here. 'In Eluard,' he writes, (p.19) 'there can be no question of *premeditated style* or *imagery* (his emphases). No other living writer has achieved such perfect *spontaneity*' (my emphasis).

Eluard remarked in *Poetry's Evidence* on the beauty of Apollinaire's image: 'Your tongue, that goldfish in the bowl of your voice', [92] then emphasized 'the supreme attraction I feel for unfathomable images, of the altogether novel relations of which the poetry called Surrealist gives us a glimpse.' He quoted some of the many images which obsess him:

> find flowers that are chairs (Rimbaud)
> Near a gentleman swallowing himself (Apollinaire)
> In the stunted clay of mimes (Tzara)
> In eating the sound of moths'(Jarry)
> The lock of hair digs a tunnel under Paris (Breton)
> The lazy suns which fed on meningitis (Char)
>
> Images are, images live, and everything becomes image [...] "Nothing is incomprehensible" (Lautréamont). Everything can be compared to everything, everything has its echo, its reason, its resemblance, its

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[91] Extracted from a conversation I had with the poet in 1994 at his Isle of Wight home.

[92] Referring to his poem 'Farewell Chorus' in the Lucien Jenkins interview, Gascoyne comments: 'It's Thirties political poetry by someone who has read and loved Guillaume Apollinaire.' *Stand*. op.cit., p.24.

> opposition and its becoming, everywhere. And this becoming is infinite.[93]

Speaking of the Surrealists in his article 'Psycho-Analytical Considerations on Modern Art', Jean Frois Wittmann declared:

> They want to speak the words of the unconscious, as the sibyl spoke the words of the god; hence the licence of their grammatical and perspective deformations, the free rein they give to associative thought, and their refusal to trust in either the criticism of the self, or the test by reality. On that account, the image, which results from the method, has assumed such importance that one is justified in saying there is a doctrine of the image in modern poetry. Modern poetry consists almost entirely of images (*TQSN*, p.102). [94]

Kathleen Raine believes that 'fragmentation characterizes the Surrealist world', and that Surrealist imagery 'is not archetypal; often striking, sometimes prophetic [...]. In the poetry of the most typical (though not, indeed, the best Surrealist poets, Eluard and perhaps René Char) every line is a new beginning.' But she goes on to say that 'the juxtaposition of image after image, whose shock at first strikes the attention, in the end wearies it for want of an organizing principle.'[95]

The question 'What for you is an image?' elicited this response from Gascoyne: 'A symbol is a thought which precedes experience and an image is something which illustrates the experience. I agree with Reverdy's definition: "the spontaneous convergence of two distinct realities".'[96] He quoted Rimbaud approvingly in his article on French poetry in 1934: 'I accustomed myself to simple hallucination. Then I expressed the sophistries of my magic by means of the hallucination of words' (*EV*, p.234).

I would suggest that the following elements are part of the theory and technique of Surrealist poetry:

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[93] In *This Quarter*, 'Surrealist Number', guest editor André Breton (September 1932), pp.145-47. Further citings as (*TQSN*).

[94] From *Revue Française de Psychoanalyse*. Robert Short has expressed very clearly how it was that the vibrant and startling images that emerged from the first experiments by Breton and Soupault with the psychoanalytical technique of 'automatic' writing, seemed to unblock a conduit to the kind of imagery employed by Rimbaud and Lautréamont: 'Surrealism' in John Cruickshank (ed.), *French Literature and its Background*, 6 'The Twentieth Century', (O.U.P., 1970), p.112.

[95] 'David Gascoyne and the Prophetic Role' (1966) in *Defending Ancient Springs* (O.U.P., 1967), p.43. Further citings as (*DGDAS*).

[96] Interview with Michel Rémy, published in *Temenos* 7 (1980), p.270.

- the appeal to inner violence and disorder;
- the 'subjective distortion of reality'[97] is reflected in the transformation and dis-location of language;
- the presence of unusual, arresting, vividly realized images in juxtaposition;
- the order of these images is dictated purely by the chosen free association method, together with the element of chance, so that they are unfixed in any logical frame because of Surrealism's contempt for reason;[98]
- the invoking of dreams, dream-states and hallucinations, and of 'automatic' writing, to reach the plane of Surreality, with the poet's mission that of revelator.

Louis Aragon claimed in his *Traité du Style* that Surrealism is not a refuge against style, countering the impression that the Surrealists rejected grammar.[99] It is not the structure of a Surrealist text that promotes ambiguity but, as Ana Balakian points out, 'the mating of words and the incongruous image that results'. She goes on to suggest that

> it was their [the Surrealists'] use of words, - an enrichment of the active vocabulary of poetry, a release from verbal inhibitions, a selection of word association beyond the barriers set up by logic, a new metaphor built upon these incongruous word groupings, and the images resulting from the association of one metaphor with another.[100]

which set apart the Surrealist way of writing from the poetry of preceding generations. In terms with which Gascoyne himself would find himself in firm agreement, she talks of Surrealist poetry as 'mental deviation and linguistic alchemy' (p.165). The free interplay of imagery was given added flexibility by omitting sentence connectors like 'thus', 'therefore', (Breton admitted that he loathed the word 'donc' in his 'Signe Ascendant'[101]). Robert Desnos commented that the tense used most frequently in Surrealist poetry is the present.[102] It might be added that the verbs employed were habitually the most basic ('to be', 'to have', 'to like/love', 'to see', and that the infinitive was often preferred.

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[97] David Lodge, 'In the Thirties' in *The Modes of Modern Writing* (Edward Arnold 1977), p.208.
[98] Gascoyne refers to 'the boundless illogical world of the dream and of uncontrolled thought' in his *A Short Survey of Surrealism*, p.131.
[99] Op. cit. (Paris: Gallimard, 1928), p.189.
[100] Balakian, *Surrealism: The Road to the Absolute* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1972), pp.164-5.
[101] In *La Clé des Champs*, (Paris: Sagittaire, 1952), p.112.
[102] In his 'Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle' (R.S., V1, p.18), as quoted in Balakian, op.cit.

We come to read Gascoyne's Surrealist poems with the knowledge that he enjoyed an insider's appreciation of the orthodox Surrealist formula in which he was well versed, both as practitioner, and as translator of the poems of Eluard, Tzara, Breton, Péret, Char and Hugnet. We should accept that words like 'understanding', 'explanation' and 'expression' are 'inappropriate', as Balakian puts it. 'Knowledge, empathy, disturbance are the type of terms that best convey the Surrealist poet's aspirations and his relationship with the reader' (Op. cit. p.166).

Gascoyne acknowledges that several of the poems arranged here together 'for the first time under the general heading "Surrealist" were first collected (confusingly accompanied by a certain number of non-Surrealist items)' in ***Man's Life is This Meat.*** He explains that 'All of these poems are united by the basic aim of achieving the greatest possible *spontaneity* (my emphasis: cf. his review of Eluard's *Facile* and his assertion, "Surrealist writing is the cultivation of spontaneity" quoted earlier in this chapter), but this aim can produce results of considerable variety' (*INCP*, p.xv). This is so, and J.H. Matthews confirms the impression left after reading those poems in ***Man's Life is This Meat*** 'rather touchingly' designated 'Surrealist'. The verse collection, he writes, 'is not without vitality and variety.'[103]

I intend to comment on and refer to a number of poems from ***Man's Life is This Meat,*** together with other Surrealist texts gathered in ***Collected Poems, 1988,*** uncollected items and unpublished material from Notebooks held in the British Library Manuscript Department. Beginning with Gascoyne's earliest published Surrealist poem at the age of seventeen, 'And the Seventh Dream is the Dream of Isis', I shall go on to examine a representative selection of some of the 'automatic' or 'quasi-automatic' pieces, including those which Gascoyne hesitates 'to designate "prose poems"' (*INCP*, p.xvi), then poems dedicated to Surrealist painters.

'And the Seventh Dream is the Dream of Isis' [104] was,

[103] 'Surrealism and England' in *Comparative Literature Studies*, I, 1 (1964), pp.64-5. Further citings as *(CLS1)*.
[104] Further references as 'And the Seventh Dream'.

> the result of my first attempt to produce a sequence of lines of poetry according to the orthodox Surrealist formula: 'Pure psychic automatism by which is intended to express ...in writing ...the real process of thought ... in the absence of all control exercised by the reason and outside all moral or aesthetic preoccupations', in the words of André Breton, instigator of the Surrealist movement (*INCP*, p.xiv).

Gascoyne collapses the contradiction between the real and the abstract in the first line: 'white curtains of infinite fatigue'. What follows can be perceived as a deviation from traditional or rational roles, functions or states of being. It is a world where, unlike Breton's non-existent curtains at the windows of houses still to be built, [105] or the white window-panes in the 'White Gloves' sequence of *Les Champs Magnétiques* by Breton and Soupault [106]:

> white curtains of tortured destinies [...]
> encourage the waistlines of women to expand
> and the eyes of men to enlarge like pocket-cameras [...]

and where the transformation of the real into the illogic of dreams and hallucination has already begun. The hallucinatory aspect operates in the sense that there are clear references to the familiar, i.e. the 'real' world, but they are expressed in a manner that severs or blocks off their connections with that world, fatally weakening our ability to recognize it in language. Literary realism has been subverted. And it was the arch-Surrealist Péret who declared that 'A pure poem is by definition subversive.'[107] But, at the same time, in Michel Rémy's reading, this 'violently disruptive text [...] suddenly' reveals the 'immense potentialities of language once its logic and rules of construction are done away with and replaced by the constant displacement of dream activity'.

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[105] 'Les rideaux qui n'ont jamais été levés/Flottent aux fenêtres des maisons qu'on construira', in *Les Manifestes du Surréalisme* (Paris: Sagittaire, 1946), p.63.

[106] 'A man descends the stairs of sleep and notices that it is raining: the window-panes are white.' Translation by Gascoyne, *The Magnetic Fields* (London: Atlas Press, 1983), p.79. *Les Champs Magnétiques* can realistically be considered the first 'Surrealist' texts, published initially in the review *Littérature* in 1919, the full version in 1920 by Au Sans Pareil, Paris, four years before Breton's first *Manifeste du Surréalisme* which did not appear until the Autumn of 1924. Gascoyne had read *Les Champs Magnétiques* in the early 1930s and his translation was published some 50 years later. Further citings as (*ITMF*).

[107] In *Le déshonneur des poètes* précédés de *La parole est à Péret* (Paris: Pauvert 1965), p.75.

The dream, suggests Rémy, 'will thus reveal what we do not want to see behind the curtains' (*SVDB,* (p.34). It is the same 'white curtains' which, incorporating the obligatory element of shock,

> teach children to sin at the age of five
> to cut out the eyes of their sisters with nail-scissors
> to run into the streets and offer themselves to unfrocked priests.

These 'sexually precocious juveniles (and by extension Gascoyne himself)', underscore the 'iconoclastic streak which runs through the poem as a whole' and 'are striking out at the conventional framework supplied by the family, religion and law', as Jem Poster persuasively suggests.[108]

Peter Nicholls points to the way in which the use of the present tense in a Surrealist text like *Les Champs Magnétiques* 'implies both a sense of simultaneous events and of their indefinite prolongation,'[109] and this double effect is evident in 'And the Seventh Dream...'. The present tense is used throughout section I and the first nine lines of section II, followed by four lines where the past continuous expresses the actions of the unnamed 'she' who 'was burning the eyes of snails in a candle/she was eating the excrement of dogs and horses.' The last fourteen lines of the third and final section in which 'little girls stick photographs of genitals to the windows of their homes' and 'virgins cover their parents' beds with tealeaves', are in the past tense. The ambiguous concluding line of the poem, 'and glass were the faces in the last looking-glass', seems to confirm that the transformation is complete: the cold faces in the last mirror of time have lost all semblance of humanity and blood-warmed flesh. This represents a closure, emphasizing the way the text turns back upon itself; and if 'And the Seventh Dream...' is fragmentary, it is not necessarily discontinuous in that there appears to have been a development of a kind between sections I and III.

Incorporating elements of surprise and absurdity, as well as shock, the poem moves forward through the associative process, what Balakian in her study of the

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[108] *The Thirties Poets,* Open Guides to Literature series (Open University Press, 1993), p.77. Further citings as (*TTP).*

[109] 'Death and Desire: The Surrealist Adventure' in *Modernisms: a literary guide* (London: Macmillan, 1995), p.284.

Surrealist image appositely terms 'the subconscious affiliations we feel between the words' (op.cit., p.146). 'And the Seventh Dream...' exemplifies her assertion that 'the Surrealist associates what we normally disassociate [...] the connections are nonsequential or psychic rather than rational' (p.147):

> the hearts of troubadours unfold like soaked mattresses [...]
> there is a horrible dentist walking out of a ship's funnel [...]

It was Reverdy who considered that the more remote the relationship between two juxtaposed distant realities, 'the stronger the resulting image would become, - the more it will have emotional power and poetic reality'.[110]

It would be unrealistic to look for a precise relationship between the mythological Isis of the title and the nameless 'she' in the universe of the poem. Isis is a Mother-Goddess figure in Egyptian mythology, both sister and wife of Osiris. He was murdered by his brother, the usurper Seth. The grieving Isis gathered together her husband's remains and 'having reassembled them, was successfully impregnated by him and conceived Horus', and assumes her special role as her son's symbolic mother and guardian. According to the myth, Isis and her sister Nephthys 'took the form of kites in their search for the body of Osiris. They are sometimes depicted on coffins and sarcophagi in human form with open wings, protecting the deceased.'[111]

Any connection is likely to be tenuous at best in a Surrealist poem, though there are two lines which appear to offer a direct link other than that of the Egyptian desert:

> her arms are like pieces of sandpaper
> or *wings of leprous birds* in taxis. (my emphasis)

If, as Rémy notes, the 'radical fragmentation' of the world of the poem supports the parallel with Isis who 'went out in search of her brother-husband Osiris' fragments' (*SVDB*, p.34), what does emerge, too, is a strong association in regard to the ineluctable presence of death, allied to decay, corruption and disease, all-pervasive in 'And the

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[110] 'The Poetic Image' in his review *Nord-Sud*,, No.13, March 1918 (facsimile), no pag.
[111] See James Hall, *Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art* (London: John Murray 1994), p.190.

Seventh Dream...', but I am not convinced of the presence of evil per se, as Poster argues (*TTP*, p.76). Here are images of disruption, dislocation and psychic anguish which serve to emphasize that this is a world about to be subjected to violent cataclysmic events, reminiscent of those described in the Old Testament:

> the year is full of unforeseen happenings
> and the time of earthquakes is at hand
>
> today is the day when the streets are full of hearses.

There is the inheritance of:

> the calamities of the plagues of the desert [...]
> today is the day when the streets are full of hearses [...]
> the reservoirs are full of human hair [...]
> large quantities of rats [are] disguised as pigeons [...]

and eyes are to be scissored out by children five years old. Jessica Maynard also acknowledges that Gascoyne has created a 'catastrophist vision through subversive juxtapositions and the telescoping of multiple perspectives' quoting the following lines:

> the edges of the leaves must be examined through microscopes
> in order to see the stains made by dying flies
> at the other end of the tube is a woman bathing her husband
> and a box of newspapers covered with handwriting
> when an angel writes the word TOBACCO across the sky
> the sea becomes covered with patches of dandruff
> the trunks of the trees burst open to release streams of milk.

'With images such as this,' she continues, '- the exterminating angel announcing social breakdown with a commercial slogan - Gascoyne marks a moment of radical inversion. In this new era of Misrule, "we rejoice to receive the blessing of criminals".' [112]

Not surprisingly, Poster proposes that 'And the Seventh Dream...' might be read from a broadly Freudian viewpoint, centring on 'the recurrent sexual imagery: the collocation of needles and hair-filled reservoirs, the tree-trunks which "burst open to release streams of milk" and the illnesses given to "possessors of pistols" which might seem to the phallically orientated psycho-analytical mind to give as clear an indication of

[112] 'Not the Sweet Home that it Looks': British Poetry, 1930-1955', in *Literature and Culture in Modern Britain*, Volume Two: 1930-1955, (ed.) Gary Day (London: Longman, 1997), p.45.

sexual obsession as the more overt references to children who "offer themselves to unfrocked priests" or who "stick photographs of genitals to the windows of their homes".' He accepts that 'The psychological curiosities' of the poem 'clearly don't preclude a sociopolitical interpretation' (*TTP*, p.77,78).

The visual element is very powerful. Colours are vivid: 'blue', 'blood-red', 'violet', as well as 'white' (repeated three times); and Gascoyne insists through repetition in section III that 'we illuminate', 'we look through a telescope', 'we see' (three times), implicating the reader voyeuristically in the apocalyptic vision of a dreamworld where there would seem to be no possibility of recovery or rebirth.

I have examined this long, self-referential text at some length: early though it is, 'And the Seventh Dream...' represents one of Gascoyne's most successful attempts to create and establish a technique and a vision which are characteristic of so many of the poems in ***Man's Life is This Meat.*** (Interestingly, 'And the Seventh Dream...' is the final poem in the collection, though it is the first in the section of 'Surrealist Poems 1933-1936' in ***Collected Poems, 1988***). In the enclosed universe of these poems, Gascoyne ridicules, attacks both what Breton calls 'the reign of logic' in the first *Manifeste*, and 'the waking state' which 'I have no choice but to consider [it] a phenomenon of interference'.[113] Language becomes 'an endless transgression of the meaning of words' (Rémy, *SVDB*, p.35) as the oppositions or contradictions of the 'real' world have been elided.

The poem 'Reflected Vehemence', as Gascoyne explains, 'probably represents the most successful of my attempts to register what Breton calls "le fonctionnement réel de la pensée" ["the real process of thought"]; it was written in haste, without hesitation or the least intention to mystify,' though he admits 'its content defies analysis' (*INCP*, p.xvi).

'In Gascoyne's poems like "And the Seventh Dream is the Dream of Isis" or "The diabolical principle",' writes Adrian Caesar, ' [...] we find lists of images which resist

[113] From 'The First Surrealist Manifesto' (1924) by Breton, in *André Breton: Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. by Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor,:University of Michigan Press, 1972), pp.12,14. Further citings as (*FSM*).

any but the most empathic and intuitive interpretation.'[114] If 'And the Seventh Dream...' was, as Gascoyne told Michèle Duclos, 'le premier poème authentiquement automatique que j'ai écrit [...] suivant la recette orthodoxe du Surréalisme,'[115] 'The Truth is Blind' was a title added 'without reflection to the result of an attempt to create a poem by adopting the technique of collage' (*INCP*, p.xv). He tells how he selected three cuttings at random from 'the sources closest to hand at the time: *Argosy Magazine*, *The Listener* and an evening newspaper'. Then he stuck them 'on two sheets of paper with spaces left between them to be filled in such a way as to link them into a more or less coherent whole, while avoiding stopping to consider anything like a normally logical connection between the three disparate component elements'. Gascoyne adds that 'a scarcely avoidable presupposition in this case was that the result would read like the account of a specific dream' (*INCP*, p.xv).

He accepts, as he told Michel Rémy, that the title is a paradoxical expression, 'found spontaneously, which equates truth and the traditional image of Justice'. The text also expresses 'my continued preoccupation with the relationship between poetry and truth, as in Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Eluard's *Poésie et Vérité* or 'Apologia', another of my poems. It is a collage poem where I think of myself as the inventor.'[116]

Caesar remarks that 'in most of his [Surrealist] poems Gascoyne, like Paul Eluard, retains some vestiges of narrative to impose a pattern upon his imagery, and thus steers away from the reefs of automatism' (*DLS*, p.182). There is, perhaps, a thin thread of narrative 'sense' in this 'worked-over' piece with its alternating fragments of verse and prose, presented in the past tense, in which the interplay of appearance and reality is echoed by the constant interaction between the four elements, earth, air, water, fire. There is particular emphasis on water and on fire in the repeated references to 'the flaming sun', 'endless streams of water and of flame', and 'the whispering of unseen flames' in the penultimate line. The 'living man' at the end of the first stanza falls in the third, and the two boatmen he sees in the second (prose) section sail on to be replaced, it seems, by a

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[114] *Dividing Lines: Poetry, class and ideology in the 1930s* (Manchester University Press, 1991), p.182. Further citings as (*DLS*).

[115] 'The first authentically automatic poem that I wrote, following the orthodox Surrealist technique.' Interview, op.cit., p.21.

[116] Op.cit. *David Gascoyne ou l'urgence de l'inexprimé*, p.120, my translation. Further citings as (*DGUI*).

conjuror who from one bag takes out a silken thread, a hare, then a beagle followed by 'a small dogboy'. From another bag he extracts 'a winsome young woman' who then becomes the centre of the poem's consciousness. She claps her hands and vanishes, to reappear on the other side of the river; there, her 'silhouette against the dusty sky' appears to represent 'a fragile statue' knocked down by 'the pilot' who 'ate her sugar head'.

The opening nine lines of 'The Truth is Blind' are arresting in terms of the disturbing imagery of nightfall:

> The light fell from the window and the day was done
> Another day of thinking and distractions
> Love wrapped in its wings passed by and coal-black Hate
> Paused on the edge of the cliff and dropped a stone
> From which the night grew like a savage plant
> With daggers for its leaves and scarlet hearts
> For flowers - then the bed
> Rose clock-like from the ground and spread its sheets
> Across the shifting sands.

The visuality of the poem is enhanced by the use of colour: here 'coal-black' and 'scarlet', later 'flaming', and in the last prose section of three lines, 'blue' and 'black'.

The world of Gascoyne's Surrealist poems is found in microcosm in 'Purified Disgust' which establishes clearly the parameters of the landscape to which the poet directs us:

> Beyond that savage pretence of knowledge
> Beyond that posture of oblivious dream
> Into the divided terrain of anguish
> Where one walks with bound hands
> Where one walks with knotted hair
> *With eyes searching the zenith* [my emphasis]
> Where one walks like Sebastian.

The insistence on 'looking' reflects here, as elsewhere in these poems, Gascoyne's fascination for that ubiquitous icon of Surrealist practice, the *eye*. Both subjective and objective, operating like an unsilvered mirror, the eye looks both inward and outward; in literature and painting, photography and film, it plays a key role in the Surrealists' systematic derangement of the senses, and what Martin Jay calls 'the violent denigration

of the visual [culminating] in Buñuel's slashing razor'.[117] In a lexical analysis I made of Gascoyne's published, uncollected and unpublished Surrealist poems and proses, the prevalence of the eye in his images is unmistakable in the frequency of its appearance on fifty-three occasions.

It is a world 'illumined by paroxysms of vision' ('Unspoken'), a world in which 'the gardens of neurosis' ('Educative Process') are located. A world where hysteria is often present or ready to erupt:

> Hysteria upon the staircase
> Hair torn out by the roots.
>
> ('Charity Week')

> In the midst of the flickering sonorous hemlocks
> A screen of hysteria blots out the folded hemlocks.
>
> ('The Rites of Hysteria')

> The worlds are breaking in my head
> Blown by the brainless wind
> That comes from afar
> Swollen with dusk and dust
> And hysterical rain.
>
> ('Yves Tanguy')

> [...]Abandoned palaces
> Tottering under the strain of being
> Full-blossoming hysterias
> Lavishly scattering their stained veined petals.
>
> ('Unspoken')

Some of the passages quoted are closely linked by metamorphosis with flowers; each is associated with the plethora of disjunctive imagery, of images of psychic disorder:

> the roof-garden was full of strangled flowers.
>
> ('Future Reference')

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[117] *Downcast Eyes. The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought* (University of California Press, 1994), p.259. Georges Bataille proposes a more radical devaluation of ordinary visual experience in his essay, 'The Pineal Eye', in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-1939,* edited by Allan Stoekl, translated by Stoekl with Carl R. Lovitt & Donald M. Leslie (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985, 1993), pp.79-80.

It was seven, it was nine o'clock, the doors were closing,
the windows were screaming. You bent over the shadow that
lay on the floor and saw its eyes dissolving.

('Lozanne')

Heraldic animals wade through the asphyxia of planets
Butterflies burst from their skins and grow long tongues
Like plants.

('Salvador Dalí')

In the evening there is a cry of despair
Silence begins spawning its myriad
Shifting away from the restless neon area
Disturbed by the menacing gestures of starvation
The unchanging programme of its manoeuvres
Its rasping grasping claws.

('Antennae')

Stop it tormentor stop the angry planet before it breaks the sky.

('The Diabolical Principle')[118]

A cluster of insane massacres turns green upon the highroad
Green as the nadir of a mystery in the closet of a dream
And a wild growth of lascivious pamphlets became a beehive
The afternoon scrambles like an asylum out of its hovel
The afternoon swallows a bucketful of chemical sorrows.

(The Rites of Hysteria')

It seems almost too obvious to point again to the startling visual appeal of all these images, their distinctive and potent pictorial quality. Gascoyne told Lucien Jenkins that 'The visual sense is very strong for me. I might describe myself as a scopophile, a voyeur.'[119] Reviewing ***Man's Life Is This Meat*** in *The Criterion*,[120] Janet Adam Smith argued that Gascoyne's poetry was that of a visualiser, producing startling collisions of images rather than words. In the Surrealist poems of 1933-36, Gascoyne seems to have evolved his own visual language in which acutely observed objects and abstractions are juxtaposed or transposed in defiance of all rational laws of context, relationships or scale.

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[118] For two interesting discussions of this poem see: Rob Jackaman, 'View From the White Cliffs: A Close Look at One Manifestation of English Surrealism', in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 21, No.1 (February 1975), pp.72-80; Paul C. Ray: 'Meaning and Textuality: A Surrealist Example', in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 26 (fall 1980), pp. 306-22.

[119] *Stand* Interview, p.23.

[120] (July 1936), p.734.

It appears that there is a double vision at work here, the fusion of private and collective anxiety. Robin Skelton suggests that the dislocation of sensibility in these poems frequently mediates 'a deeply moral perception of the state of society'.[121] Gascoyne is employing and exploring the orthodox Surrealist formula; simultaneously, he is projecting from an anguished inner landscape, both his own deeply personal problems, relating to his depression, the Void, his sexual identity, - and his very deep concern with the 'severe crisis' in the exterior world, of the human condition in England and Europe in the mid-thirties, with the ineluctable threat of cataclysmic war. When I pointed out to Gascoyne the incidence of references to hysteria, he was surprised:

> I tried to write poetry that reflected the atmosphere of the times, that was typical of the febrile atmosphere of the thirties; for example, the bombardment of the workers' flats in Vienna (as in Spender's poem), the feverish, sinister atmosphere of the film *Dr. Mabuse*, smuggled out of Germany. The unpublished poem you've shown me, 'Asylum', reflects this. Another film was Pabst's of Kurt Weill's *Threepenny Opera*.[122]

The hysteria is located within the poet as well as perceived in the outside world which is 'Other', depicted as an asylum, through images of alienation, dislocation, paranoia. R.D. Laing's assertion in *The Politics of Experience* seems particularly relevant: 'Only by the most outrageous violation of ourselves have we achieved our capacity to live in relative adjustment to a civilization apparently driven to its own destruction.'[123] It has been argued that 'normality' or the adjustment to such a state of affairs is itself a form of madness.

I am prompted to make a connection with Robin Skelton's observation about the poetry of the early Auden: 'The terror that lurks around the corner in some of Auden's poems may be couched in terms of Europe, but it communicates a personal nightmare.'[124] Caesar uses a similar analogy: he argues that 'A dialectic is achieved between the internal psychic nightmare and the nightmare of political event. As well as being Surreal,' he suggests, 'it also implicitly explains Surrealism as the concomitant of prevailing political

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[121] 'Introduction' to *David Gascoyne: Collected Poems* (O.U.P., 1965), p.xii.
[122] Part of our 1994 conversations on the Isle of Wight at the poet's home.
[123] (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967), p.89.
[124] His 'Introduction' as editor to *The Poetry of the Thirties* (Penguin Books, 1964), p.36. Further citings as (*RSPT*).

and cultural conditions. The world that Auden observes as a superior outsider - "This England, where nobody is well" - is given direct, emotive expression from within' (*DLS*, p.183). In the second of his answers to 'An Enquiry' [a questionnaire] in *New Verse*, 11 (October 1934), the eighteen year-old poet had written, 'What might be useful now would be a poem expressing the ever-rising feeling of crisis, anxiety, and panic [...] I mean a poem narrating the contemporary zeitgeist of Europe, or even of the world.'[125] The younger Gascoyne was experiencing what Derek Stanford calls 'the 'frightful attraction and vertigo of those who dwell on the precipice of history'. At one level, Auden's *Spain* is a response to his own acute awareness of the historical moment. Gascoyne's poetry at this time, proposes Stanford, 'creates a world that is no escape from or substitute for, the world we already know. In his verse we are able to experience the total impact of wickedness - evil itself assumes an image.'[126] I was reminded, too, in Gascoyne's inescapable awareness of the Void to which he refers often in his *Journals*, of Baudelaire writing in his *Intimate Journals*: 'In the moral as in the physical world, I have been conscious always of an abyss...I have cultivated my hysteria with delight and terror. Now I suffer continually from vertigo, and today, 23rd January 1862, I have received a singular warning. I have felt the wind of the wing of madness pass over me.'[127] One of Gascoyne's journal entries reads, 'Where are we, what is this strange and terrifying world that we have woken up in and in which there is no longer any firm ground beneath our feet?' On the previous page he has written, 'I have looked at myself and I have seen the void.' Later, he defines anguish as 'sense of the Void; of being personally implicated in imminent human disaster and in tragic human futility.'[128]

When I came to ask Gascoyne about the various references to hysteria in the 'Surrealist poems 1933-36', I had already made what I thought was the reasonable assumption that they reflected the French Surrealists' fascination with the subject and particularly with the work of Dr. Charcot at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris during the

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[125] This was a response to question 2: 'Do you think there can now be a use for narrative poetry?' p.12

[126] 'David Gascoyne' in *The Freedom of Poetry* (Falcon Press, 1947), p.42. Further citings as (*TFP*).

[127] CIX, *My Heart Laid Bare*, translated by Christopher Isherwood (Blackamore Press Ltd., 1930 & 1989), pp.56 & 268.

[128] *Collected Journals*, p.187. See Henry Miller's visceral and apocalyptic description of the temper of his times in his Epilogue to *Black Spring*, in *The Booster* (November 1937), p.29.

last thirty years of the previous century.[129] The section 'Surrealism and Madness' in the Surrealist number of *This Quarter* to which I referred earlier, includes (untitled) a translation of 'The Quinquagenary of Hysteria 1878-1928' which Gascoyne had read, along with the rest of the contents, 'by the time of my first visit to Paris where I spent my seventeenth birthday'.[130] Two years later, he would mention this celebratory essay (first published in number eleven of *La Révolution surréaliste*) in his ***A Short Survey of Surrealism***: '[...] the article by Breton and Aragon marking the fiftieth anniversary of hysteria (defined by Charcot at Salpêtrière in 1878)' (p.82), which concludes:

> Hysteria is a more or less irreducible mental condition, marked by the subversion, quite apart from any delirium-system, of the relations established between the subject and the moral world under whose authority he believes himself to be practically. This mental condition is based on the need of a reciprocal seduction, which explains the hastily accepted miracles of medical suggestion (or counter-suggestion). Hysteria is not a pathological phenomenon and *may in all respects be considered as a supreme means of expression* [My emphases] (*TQSN*, p.105).[131]

In Gascoyne's poem, 'The Rites of Hysteria', we seem to have in Dalí's words in *The Conquest of the Irrational*, 'Images which provisionally are neither explicable nor reducible by the systems of logical intuition or by the rational mechanisms. The images of concrete irrationality are thus authentically unknown images [...]' (op.cit., p.13). This is the Surrealist technique consciously at work, demonstrating what Derek Stanford has called [in his essay on Gascoyne] its 'triumph over causality' and 'the wilful dispersion of meaning' in a style 'whose syntax dispensed with the need for analysis' and where imagery is 'deliberately disconnected' (*TFP*, pp.47,41,45). The poet's capacity to

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[129] Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-93) has been described as the founder of modern neurology. He is particularly noted for his studies of hysteria, 'which he refused to categorize as an exclusively female disorder, and for the use of hypnosis in its investigation. While emphasizing organic factors and thereby underestimating the role of suggestion in the development of hysteria, he acknowledged the relevance of psychological traumas, dissociated from the patient's consciousness, in determining the nature of its symptoms. Freud was indebted to Charcot, having attended his celebrated clinical examinations in 1885 and 1886.' Entry in Peter France (ed.), *The New Oxford Companion To Literature in French* (O.U.P., 1995), p.152.

[130] 'Francis Picabia: Funny Guy'. Gascoyne states that 'By the time of my first visit to Paris [..] I had obtained and become familiar with the contents of the special Surrealist number of the Anglo-French review *This Quarter*,' p.3.

[131] The issue of *This Quarter* also contains: Breton's essay, 'Surrealism Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow'; other theoretical texts by Dalí; René Crevel's account of early Surrealist experiments in hypnosis and automatism; Eluard's 'Poetry's Evidence'; Max Ernst's 'Inspiration to Order'; and an anthology of Surrealist poems by Breton, Dalí, Eluard, Péret and Tzara, as well as the complete scenario of the Surrealist film, *Un chien andalou*, by Buñuel and Dalí.

'strangeify' the normal world, in Roger Cardinal's apposite terminology, is manifest throughout. Clearly applicable, too, is Rémy's remark apropos 'The Rites of Hysteria': 'the incantatory repetition of the rout of univocal sense' (*LEA*, p.13).

In conventional terms 'the lines say almost nothing but express a great deal,' as Gascoyne himself wrote about the last three pages of *The Magnetic Fields* (*ITMF*, p.17). It is difficult, perhaps unwise, to attempt to extrapolate from this whole sequence of obsessive images of dislocation and bizarre juxtapositions any sense of a discernible progression. In effect, images beget images. But what does emerge is clear evidence of psychic anguish and disorder, of a mind disturbed in a disturbed world presented allegorically as an asylum. In similar vein, Caesar comments that 'by juxtaposing the private nightmares of the psyche with those of the public world of history, Gascoyne subtly suggests the relationship between the two.'[132] Poems like 'The Rites of Hysteria' and 'The Cubical Domes' express 'a vision of both the individual and a society that are crazed and unhealthy. They imply that a world full of political terrors and personal misfortune is bound to be perceived in terms of the absurd and irrational' (*DLS*, p.183). The cumulative effect of the thirty-three lines preceding the penultimate line, is to describe with frightening intensity the onset of hysteria to its outbreak. The reader is drawn to focus on particular images within individual lines. Is there an implication that the hysteria is organic? [133]

The universe of the poem is defined by violence and torture: the sun is stifled; tongues tied up with wire; a gibbet half-strangled in a peculiar inversion; wings are cut off; the limbs of the galaxy are severed to denote a kind of cosmic powerlessness. We see 'a cluster of insane massacres, the afternoon scrambles like an asylum out of its hovel, swallows a bucketful of chemical sorrows'. Here are poison, putrefaction, creeping groans, nightmare, as an 'icicle stabs at the breast'. I have difficulty with Michèle Duclos's observation, expressed in her interview with the poet: 'Vos poèmes surréalistes

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[132] Paul C. Ray makes an interesting suggestion in his *The Surrealist Movement in England* (Cornell University Press, 1971): 'One of the startling discoveries in Surrealism, in the doctrine of "objective chance", is that the objective world responds - or corresponds - to the inner vision, that the alogical automatic mind (or the unconscious) has such subtle links with the objective world that it can be prophetic of events in that world. The nightmarish juxtapositions in the Surrealist imagination [...] proved all too prophetic of events in wartime London.' pp.180-81.

[133] These points emerged from a discussion with Professor Allan Ingram of the University of Northumbria.

me paraissent beaucoup moins agressifs envers la société que ceux d'un Roger Roughton ou des Surréalistes français ...' (p.21).[134] The suggestion that Gascoyne's images are less violent than those of Roughton who wrote few poems, not all of which would qualify as 'Surrealist', is simply not true, and I am not basing my response solely on 'The Rites of Hysteria' which, on its own, in its expression of psychic and political violence, would seem to disprove Duclos's observation. Gascoyne's answer, though brief, is much more to the point: 'Benjamin Péret surtout.' Together with Aragon, it could be argued.

'Charity Week' is dedicated to Max Ernst whom Gascoyne first met in 1933. Uwe Schneede claims that after 1919/20, when proto-Fascist tendencies began to make themselves felt in Germany, 'there had been individual works by Max Ernst which pointed a prophetic finger at the coming horrors.' Citing the first version of the painting 'Europe After the Rain' (1933), he writes, 'The continent is deformed, laid waste, all traces of civilization are wiped out. What remains of the destruction is scarcely identifiable.'[135] J.H. Matthews felt that those mysterious forests painted by Ernst in the late twenties and early thirties 'capture the mood Gascoyne transposes in "Charity Week", with the influence of Ernst upon the poet's vision freely admitted' (*CLS1*, p.66).

The tone adopted in 'Charity Week' is, initially, matter-of-fact. In certain lines of the first two stanzas, Gascoyne would appear to suggest in verbal terms specific images from different sections of Ernst's collage-novel, *Une Semaine de Bonté* (1934).[136] The poem begins:

> Have presented the lion with medals of mud
> One for each day of the week
> One for each beast in this sombre menagerie
> Shipwrecked among the clouds.

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[134] 'Your Surrealist poems appear much less aggressive towards society than those of a Roger Roughton or the French Surrealists'.

[135] *The Essential Max Ernst*, translated by R.W. Last (London: Thames & Hudson, 1972), p.144.

[136] Gascoyne had bought a copy of Ernst's first collage-novel, *La Femme 100 Têtes* (1929) at the Surrealist bookshop in the rue de Clichy. His own collage, specially made for the International Surrealist Exhibition in London in 1936 incorporated elements from a late Victorian engraving of seabirds and seals. His take on the Greek myth presents the hero encased in some kind of machine, while 'Andromeda' is a dehumanized figure, merely a woman's head superimposed on the business-end of a badminton racket. The seals that survey the couple are bemused. The collage was acquired by the Tate Gallery in 1991.

The 'sombre menagerie' includes, by implication, the dragon and the laughing rooster of books three and five, as well as the lion of Belfort, described by Gascoyne as 'the "hero" of Ernst's sequence of collages' (*INCP*, p.xvi). But after the aural word-play and association of 'lice', 'ice', 'eyes', 'noughts' and 'crosses', the dramatic tension of Ernst's series of images is echoed in the last ten lines which develop further the assault in line five: 'shattered by the violently closed eyelids', that occurs bizarrely displaced in the sky. Hysteria 'erupts upon the staircase'. Now hair is wrenched out by the roots, lace handkerchiefs torn to pieces, 'stained by tears of blood'. Blood is one of the seven elements in Ernst's collage-novel and relates to Wednesday; water is Monday's element which, according to Werner Spies, 'projects an apocalyptic deluge'.[137]

> These are the phenomena of zero
> Invisible men on the pavement
> Spittle in the yellow grass
> The distant roar of disaster
> And the great bursting womb of desire.

Yellow is the colour of the cover of the fifth and final book of the planned seven, and relates to Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

Gascoyne told me that by 1934 he had seen Ernst's 'Iconographie' at the end of *Une Semaine de Bonté.* These collages of Charcot's hysterical women constructed by Ernst and displayed in the last seven plates of the book portray disjunctions of mind and body, and they both 'frame' and 'create a discourse on hysteria and the "silence" of bodily expression'.[138] Hal Foster argues in his study *Compulsive Beauty* that the melodramatic return of the repressed in *Une Semaine de Bonté* 'is registered not only in the becoming-monstrous of the figures but also in the becoming-hysterical of the interiors,'[139] and that what is repressed is sexual desire. 'Embodied in any representation of hysteria, especially as a proto-Surrealist muse,' writes Elizabeth Legge, 'must be its erotic connotation'

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[137] 'The invention of the Surrealist universe' in *Max Ernst Collages*, translated by John William Gabriel (Thames & Hudson, 1991), p.232.

[138] Patricia Ondek Laurence, *The Reading of Silence: Virginia Woolf in the English Tradition* (Stanford University Press, 1991), p.127. Ted Gott goes further in his essay 'Lips of coral: sex and violence in Surrealism', in the catalogue *Surrealism: Revolution by Night*, National Gallery of Australia (1993). He points in Ernst's 'collage panoramas' to what he sees as 'the systematic violation and sadistic deconstruction of the female form within them', p.149. Elizabeth M. Legge explains how 'During the *sommeils* self-hypnosis sessions, the perceptive Desnos identified Ernst as the "white smock" of Salpêtrière,' in *Max Ernst: the Psychoanalytic Sources* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), p.65.

[139] October Books (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1993), p.177.

(op.cit. pp.119-20). 'The great bursting womb of desire' in the last line of the poem reflects this; perhaps, too, as Sarah Wilson suggested to me, there is an unconscious reference here to Gascoyne's bi-sexuality.[140] Rémy offers an interesting interpretation of the final lines:

> It is when heralding 'The distant roar of disaster/And the great bursting womb of desire' that Gascoyne's writing hesitates again, as we hesitate in the slight phonetic gap between 'disaster' and 'desire'; all that we see constitutes then the 'phenomena of zero', i.e. phenomena which are neither positive nor negative, neither destructive nor constructive, but are both, and thus abolish contradiction. Writing and thinking become undifferentiated and turn the text into a hysterical gesture, the source of a new grammar' (*SVDB*, p.34).

Gascoyne acknowledges the influence of Paul Eluard, the first Surrealist he met on his first visit to Paris in 1933, in an interview with Michel Rémy. 'Both "Educative Process" and "Antennae" were written under the influence of Eluard's poetry' (*DGUI*, p.120), and he indicated, in particular, *L'Amour la Poésie* and *A Toute Epreuve*. During all of Eluard's life and development as poet and essayist, he was closely involved with painters, such as Max Ernst, and painting. He collaborated with Ernst, his work was illustrated by his artist friends, and he wrote and dedicated several poems to them: 'Max Ernst', 'Giorgio de Chirico', 'André Masson', 'Georges Braque', 'Balthus',[141] 'Joan Miró', 'Salvador Dalí', 'Yves Tanguy', 'Arp', 'Pablo Picasso, 'Paul Klee', 'Man Ray', 'René Magritte', 'Marc Chagall', 'Paul Delvaux' and 'Fernand Léger'. When Eluard writes a poem about a painter, according to Clive Scott, 'he is summoning a relationship of osmosis'. And this, he adds, 'reflects the very process of looking at pictures: it is not a matter of intellectual confrontation, where demands are made, values sought and so on, but a gradual assimilation of one mentality by another.'[142]

Gascoyne wrote five poems on painters, Ernst, Dalí, Tanguy, Magritte and de Chirico, though he only refers to the first four in his 'Introductory Notes'. 'The World of Chirico', one of his earliest poems in 1933, seemed to have been forgotten. He 'found it

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[140] Mary Lefkowitz provides another interpretation in her study *Heroines and Hysterics*, when she explains that 'the term hysteria means "wombiness": *hysterai*, literally "the latter parts", is the politely vague term for the uterus' (Duckworth, 1981), p.13.

[141] Gascoyne's translations of these 5 poems are in ***Selected Verse Translations*** (Enitharmon, 1996).

[142] Introduction to *Anthologie Eluard*, Methuen's Twentieth Century Texts (Methuen Educational Ltd., 1983), p.20.

preferable to place together the four poems inspired by or dedicated to painters' in his ***Collected Poems, 1988***, although 'The Very Image' (to René Magritte) was not included in ***Man's Life is This Meat*** and the other three did not appear as a group but were separated from each other in the collection. '"Yves Tanguy",' explains Gascoyne, 'attempts to evoke the atmosphere of his earlier unearthly landscapes' (*INCP*, p.xvi). And does so very effectively: the poet adopts the persona of the artist and employs imagery transposed directly from Tanguy's pictorial world, but with no colours, except by implication. 'The endless desert' (line seven), 'the dead grey oceans' (line nine), 'deserts' (line twenty), 'the sand' (last line), are clear references to the late twenties paintings which established Tanguy's reputation as a Surrealist, who stressed the role of automatism in the creative process. The landscapes, often 'peopled' by strange biomorphic and organic forms, are ambiguous in that they offer a double vision: at the same time, they resemble either a desert or the sea bed in a space without limits, challenging visual perception through the omission of the line of the horizon:

> The fading cries of the light
> Awaken the endless desert
> Engrossed in its tropical slumber
> Enclosed by the dead grey oceans
> Enclasped by the arms of the night.

Breton claims that these are 'mental' or interior landscapes, [143] and Gascoyne's 'Yves Tanguy' seems to reinforce this reading in the repetition of the line 'The worlds are breaking in my head', which begins the first, third and fourth stanzas. This is an apocalyptic poem which follows the cosmic explosion of 'The Chariot' included in ***Man's Life is This Meat*** but not designated 'Surrealist'; it also brings to mind Yeats's chilling vision in 'The Second Coming' of the 'rough beast [...] somewhere in sands of the desert/ A shape with lion body and the head of man' slouching towards Christ's birthplace:

> The worlds are breaking in my head
> Blown by the brainless wind
> That comes from afar
> Swollen with dusk and dust
> And hysterical rain.

[143] In his preface to the 1927 exhibition of 23 of Tanguy's paintings at the galerie Surréaliste in Paris. Quoted in Christopher Green, *The European Avant-Gardes* (London: Zwemmer, 1995), pp.469-70, 474.

'Salvador Dalí' was originally entitled 'In Defence of Humanism' when first published in *New Republic* in October 1934.[144] Gascoyne told me with a smile that it was an ironic title then, and that he had put himself in the poem as a David (unnamed) to Goliath who

> [...] plunges his hand into the poisoned well
> And bows his head and feels my feet walk through his brain.
> The children chasing butterflies turn around and see him there
> With his hand in the well and my body growing from his head,
> And are afraid. They drop their nets and walk into the wall like smoke.

Gascoyne added, 'I was also incorporating autobiographical details into the poem.'

'Le poème sur Dalí,' he said to Michèle Duclos, 'n'est pas une transcription dalienne, mais un hommage' (Interview, p.122).[145] 'Salvador Dalí' does not, Gascoyne writes, 'attempt to present in verbal terms the imagery to be found in Dalí's best-known works, but to provide some sort of parallel equivalent of the personal "mythology" his paintings embody' (*INCP*, p.xvi). He said to me in 1994 that Dalí was 'hugely perceptive with a very acute system of ideas, and influenced early on by Lacan, and by Pierre Jean Jouve's wife, Blanche Reverchon.' Appropriately, but unsurprisingly, 'Salvador Dalí' is very strong in terms of its visuality. The metaphor in a line like 'the sun above them is a bag of nails' is a reminder of the painter's paranoiac-critical method, where alternative readings are willed on to the external world so that the mind can look at one thing and see another; while the disturbing images in the final two stanzas shock the reader with their violence and wilful cruelty:

> Sand falls into the boiling rivers through the telescopes' mouths
> And forms clear drops of acid with petals of whirling flame.
> Heraldic animals wade through the asphyxia of planets,
> Butterflies burst from their skins and grow long tongues like plants,
> The plants play games with a suit of mail like a cloud
>
> Mirrors write Goliath's name upon my forehead,
> While the children are killed in the smoke of the catacombs
> And lovers float down from the cliffs like rain.

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[144] The poem was included by Michael Roberts in his influential *The Faber Book of Modern Verse* (London: Faber & Faber, 1936) pp.339-40 with this title.

[145] 'The poem on Dalí isn't a Dalian transcription [of images] but a homage'.

The last line seems to prefigure the famous Magritte work, 'Golconde' (1953), where bowler-hatted businessmen in rigid pose are 'raining' from the sky (although there is ambiguity in the sense that they may be moving up rather than down – or are motionless).

Gascoyne says that the title of one of Magritte's paintings could be ascribed to each of the six stanzas of 'The Very Image', 'though I had no idea when starting the poem what images were going to occur to me in the course of writing it: I had decided in advance only that each stanza should have five lines' (*INCP*, p.xvi).

Breton pointed out in *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* how Magritte 'proceeded to put the visual image systematically on trial' (Paris 1965, p.72), and Gascoyne's images echo the meticulous, dead-pan quality of the artist's approach and technique in his 'patient interrogation of objects with which we are apparently most familiar' which 'undermines our confidence in the stability of visual forms.'[146] Gascoyne explained to Michel Rémy that when, early in the 1980s, he read this poem at the Tate Gallery, he thought it would be interesting to give a title of a Magritte painting to each of the six stanzas accordingly: 1 'The Human Condition'; 2 'The Charms of a Landscape'; 3 'The Man of the Sea'; 4 'Memory of a Journey'; 5 'The Reckless Sleeper'; 6 'The Captives'.[147] They are not 'actual Magritte paintings; I simply wanted to indicate some paintings that he would have been able to produce' (Duclos interview, p.22, my translation).

The subject of 'The World of Chirico'[148] is a painter whose early work so caught the attention and inflamed the imagination of the Surrealists that his influence was crucial

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[146] Robert Short, *Dada and Surrealism* (Octopus Books Ltd., 1980), p.112. Alan Young is damning in his comment on 'The Very Image' in his *dada and after*. While he can appreciate the attempt 'to achieve in simple words the deceptively simple effects of Magritte's complex visual imagination,' he finds the result 'a misguidedly weak attempt' and argues that 'a mere listing of "images", no matter how unusual singly or in combination, could not constitute a worthwhile poem' [he is referring generally here to the Surrealist poems which appeared in *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*] Op. cit. p.182. Jem Poster comments that 'The relative weakness of Gascoyne's poem ['The Very Image'] doesn't, I think, stem from any kind of Surrealist excess but, on the contrary, from its imaginative tameness' (*TTP*, p.76).

[147] He emphasized that the window is the subject which struck him most forcibly in Magritte's work (*DGUI*, p.122). I found the rough draft of a poem entitled 'The Very Image' in one of Gascoyne's notebooks in the British Library (Add. 56042, c.1936). It remains unpublished. The first stanza of two is as follows: The dark sun is drowned/Floats like a straw/Down the torrents of flight/That man cannot dam with his hand/Standing there like a stone/In the white space between two dawns/The one behind him is the dawn of too much night/Before him lies the dawn of too scant day.'

[148] *New English Weekly*, (September 14th 1933), in the selection of 'Ten Proses'. Included in *A Short Survey of Surrealism* (1935), pp.74-5, the prose poem remained uncollected until reprinted in the

to the development of the movement. Here, Gascoyne at seventeen offers what is in effect a deceptively simple, yet vivid verbal collage, dazzling in the accuracy with which he synthesizes the essential qualities of these 'metaphysical' paintings, in an amalgam of the visual elements common to these lonely dramas played out in the melancholy and mystery of the piazzas and colonnades of a modern industrial metropolis. He provides, too, as the poem ends, more than a hint of the disquieting ambience of these inner landscapes as a sense of expectation and foreboding, so characteristic of the paintings, is articulated in the empty gesture of the sinister dehumanized

> abnormally tall figure, swathed, its head featureless as an egg, with bricks, scaffolding, models of buildings and little arches tumbling from its dreadful breast. Its arm creaks as it raises its rubber hand to point at us, meaninglessly ...

In Rob Jackaman's apposite observation about these poems on Surrealist artists, '[Gascoyne] maximizes the effect of his visual imagery by underpinning it with appropriate poetic techniques not readily available to painters.' [149]

Eluard's 'Humphrey Jennings' (1938), appeared in the *London Bulletin*, No.11 in March 1939. Gascoyne's translation of it was not published until 1996 in his ***Selected Verse Translations*** which collected together twenty-six versions of Eluard's poems. Gascoyne has spoken to me warmly of Jennings with whom he 'first came into contact in the mid-thirties [...], through Surrealism and then Mass-Observation.'[150] He added: 'I must have been one of the last people to see Jennings, apart from the film technicians, just before he died [in a bizarre accident when he slipped and fell on a Greek island, while filming in 1950]. "I know what I'm going to do with the rest of my life," he told me, "I'm going to paint".' 'Three Verbal Objects' were included as untitled poems in the catalogue *Surrealist Objects and Poems* for the exhibition at the London Gallery which opened in November 1937. By then, Gascoyne 'had moved to a Paris attic and virtually ceased writing in the Surrealist vein'. The three prose poems 'are posthumously dedicated to

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selection of Gascoyne poems, edited by Roger Scott & Nicholas Johnson, in *Maggie O'Sullivan, David Gascoyne, Barry Macsweeney*, etruscan reader III (etruscan books, 1997), pp. 48-9.

149 'The Thirties', in *The Course of English Surrealist Poetry Since the 1930s* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), p.90.

150 'A poet's way of bringing order out of chaos', a review of Humphrey Jennings, *Pandaemonium 1660-1886: The coming of the Machine as seen by contemporary observers*, in *The Tablet* (23 November 1985), p.1232.

Humphrey Jennings, in acknowledgement of the influence that his "Reports" and other admirable short texts, first published by Roger Roughton in *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*, had on me' (*INCP*, p.xvii).[151]

Rémy suggests that it is the 'spareness and economy of means he [Jennings] used to make us glance at, if not pass over to, the other side of reality' which characterize his originality. 'The defining moment in the text [of the "Reports"] may be provided by a typographical change or the disconcerting appearance in the text of an unexpected jarring word or phrase, which emphasize displacement in relationships and in space and time' (*SVDB*, pp.37, 38).

The images and visual impressions in Gascoyne's texts, which are longer than those published by Jennings, make reference to elements that belong to the familiar world but do so in a manner that only serves to sever their connection with the everyday. Here is a universe precisely described, but imaginatively reconstructed, in correct, properly punctuated simple and complex sentences. Our complacency as readers, our seeming recognition and understanding of the patterns of thought and ideas we follow in each of the texts can be subverted without warning and to hallucinatory effect. In the first of the 'Three Verbal Objects', after the surprise of 'the green light of the setting sun', it is the infiltration of a single, sinister adjective which begins to initiate the 'disorder of logic':

> The people love the warrior; and even as he lies sinking in the marsh, they deck his image with a thousand *lethal* flowers. They cannot see his wounds. [my emphasis]

At the beginning of the second piece, which seeks to verbalize in gentle, mellifluous terms 'the natural beauties' of an unspecified country, it is a simile that brings us up short, throwing logic and vision into turmoil:

> [...] The hills are bathed in a glow of the most subliminal tranquillity, like that which is given out by the innocent eyes of children, milky and diffuse. The shadows cast by the further ranges eat into the plain like acid.

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[151] Looking again at some of the Gascoyne's 'Ten Proses' from 1933, it seems that these, and the 'Surrealist Cameos' which appeared two months later in the *New English Weekly* in 1933 (to be retitled 'Automatic Album Leaves' in 1988) were not so very different in approach and technique from the later 'Three Verbal Objects', or from Jennings's 'Reports'.

'Phenomena', too, is a prose poem 'influenced by the texts of Jennings or Charles Madge' (*DGUI*, p.123), both of whom inaugurated the Mass-Observation movement in 1936. Kathleen Raine, who was married to Madge in the thirties, sees Mass-Observation representing 'for a brief moment, an English counterpart to Surrealism (at all events of certain aspects of it) an altogether original variant of the irrationalist movement' (*DGDAS*, p.47). She refers to

> a kind of poetic (or pictorial) imagery at once irrational and objective; and it was David Gascoyne who finally realized and perfected a kind of poetry (written also by Charles Madge and Humphrey Jennings) in which an imagery of precise and objective realism, gathered from the daily human (and therefore especially urban) scene, from the habitat of common man, is informed with a content not only supremely imaginative, but infused with the imagination of the collective mind of which it is an eloquent, if unconscious expression; a listening to the dreaming ...of a nation or a world, itself unaware of the purport of its own fantasies (pp.47-8).

Geoffrey Grigson published 'Charity Week', the only poem of the five printed in *New Verse* 15 (1935) to be collected in ***Man's Life is This Meat.*** The others, 'Germinal', 'Gnu Opaque', 'Marrow' and 'Baptism', form a 'group of short pieces of a type quite dissimilar from the apparently incoherent pell-mell outpouring of images and phrases characteristic of "And the Seventh Dream..."' as Gascoyne explains. 'Each of them appears to have some underlying theme or subject, though never a preconceived one. The title was usually added after the poem's completion, as is said to have been the case with the poetic pictures of Paul Klee. "Gnu Opaque", for instance, was the watermark fairly distinguishable in the paper on which it was written' (*INCP*,p.xv).

'Germinal' plays on the notion so crucial to Surrealist doctrine and practice of 'The marvellous' which is 'yet unborn/In the Manor of the Tongue'. The next line, 'Seed fallen until now on stony ground', is in direct association with the title and connotes the quality of being both productive and incipient, while presaging 'An announcement of future marvels' and the link with Breton's assertion: 'Let us not mince words: the marvellous is always beautiful, anything marvellous is beautiful, in fact only the marvellous is beautiful...', which closes one section of the first Manifesto (*FSM*, p.14). Time in the poem oscillates between 'yesterday' and 'tomorrow', and the present indicated by 'now'. The tone is conversational, the structure a four-line stanza followed

by one of three, then one of two. While upper case letters are used at the beginning of each line, there is no punctuation until the final end-stopped line.

'Gnu Opaque' begins emphatically: 'No more resistance'. The tone of voice is assured: 'No letters this morning/Tomorrow will be a fine day'. The discontinuous poetic structure operates in terms of Roger Cardinal's process of 'derealisation in poetry' which

> proceed[s] beyond the primary stage where experience is simply aesthetically stylized or formalized as a set of signs. It goes beyond the fictional mirrorings, contractions or configurations which stand for aspects of the real world. It advances to the logical extreme, the total eclipse of *all* allusion to that world. The voyage into unreality thus ends up with the complete suppression of all trace of material imprint.[152]

There is no development to be found within the twelve lines, although the second line's 'No letters this morning' connects with 'screeds' in line 4 and with the closing line, 'And night writes no replies'. The middle stanza employs both the Conditional (twice) and the Present tenses, but is non-sequential in relation to the opening three lines:

> Screeds of such blossomings
> Should fill each lenten interval
> Lobster-clawed love should diminish
> On the roads leading to all countries
> Famine veers away.

The apparent realities at the beginning become unrealities at the end where 'It isn't easy to see the light'.

'Marrow' begins with a rhetorical question: 'O talisman and all the rest/Where is the teeming myriad gone?' Here, through the systematic displacement of logic and the association process, both vision and thus comprehension, are thrown into turmoil. However, the disruption is not violent. Characteristically, there is no punctuation, no sense of connection between the lines (disposed in three irregular stanzas of six, seven and two lines) in which objects from the 'real' world : 'I seem to see a mushroom growing upon the globe', jostle with personified abstractions:

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[152] In *Figures of Reality* (London: Croom Helm,1981), p.42.

> Incandescent mutability
> Decrees that emotion goes early to bed
> Metallic starshine of the mood
> Indicates losing breath
> Losing head and heart
> In the shopwindows of the mind
> *Like watercress* [my emphasis].

The simile (line 13) cannot be deconstructed because there are no apparent points of comparison to indicate, as we have already lost touch with reality. The preceding simile in the first stanza is, perhaps, a little less abstruse than the dehumanizing metaphor that follows [my emphases]:

> Women are *often* spectral
> They *often* walk down the street *like banjos*
> Their eyes are *often* no more than mere scraps of paper.

Man Ray's famous photographic composition, *Le violon d'Ingres* (1924), which mimics a painted nude, provides perhaps a point of connection here; we recognize in the silver print 'the multiple visual-aural pun that rhymes violin shape with woman's torso,' and as Roger Shattuck suggests, 'sets off an inexhaustible series of associations that combines mystery, humour and the erotic.'[153] The repetition of 'often' (above) is not unusual in a Surrealist poem where the mind runs free, unshackled, seeking to plunder the 'imagination which knows no bounds [...]. Imagination alone offers me some intimation of what *can be*' (Breton, *FSM*, pp.10,11).

'Marrow' ends on the edge of expectancy, and with a more assured tone of voice than is the case at the beginning of the poem: 'Until I wear the close chaplet/There will be no more time for tears'.

'Baptism', an eleven-line poem (with stanzas of three, six, and two lines), represents more unambiguously, despite its 'shorthand' and fragmentary nature, the sense of the 'bringing about new events by and through language, thus announcing the imminence of revolt'.[154] The speaker has 'Had enough of barbarity' and 'enough, too, of

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[153] 'Candor and Perversion in No-Man's Land', in *Perpetual Motif: The Art of Man Ray*, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988), p.318.

[154] Michel Rémy, *Les Enfants d'Alice: la peinture surréaliste en Angleterre 1930-1960*, Galerie 1900-2000 (Paris, 1982), p.13. Further citings as (*LEA*).

illusion/Dreams of peace'. The religious ritual of christening implicit in the title, together with the idea of immersion in water, provides an explanation for the first two lines of the second stanza: 'Walking in the water/Or upon it', which are followed by a direct allusion to the ceremony itself of baptism: 'With wet fingers on the brow'.

Again, the speaker looks to 'tomorrow' and the apparent prospect of political action. He is ready: 'No longer expectant but prepared/Have had enough of was...', and the notion of baptism may well be equated with politicization: 'Statement: '*If you are with us you are red*', in the context of Gascoyne joining the Communist Party and taking part in anti-Mosley marches, (described, as I have already indicated, in his ***Collected Journals***).[155]

In his synthesis of psychological discoveries, particularly Freud's theory of dream, Breton refers to 'this considerable portion of psychic activity' and asks at one point:

> What reason, I ask, a reason so much vaster than the other, makes dreams seem so natural and allows me to welcome unreservedly a welter of episodes so strange that they would confound me now as I write? And yet I can believe my eyes, my ears; *this great day* [my italics] has arrived, this beast has spoken. (*TQSN*, pp.12,14).

Earlier in the *Manifesto*, Breton writes, 'There remains madness, "the madness that one locks up," as it has been aptly described. [...] I could spend my whole life prying loose the secrets of the insane' (*FSM*, p.14). It would not seem unreasonable to suggest that the italicized phrase, '*this great day*', either consciously or unconsciously, provided the title for Gascoyne's 'The Great Day'.[156]

This Surrealist 'prose poem' remained uncollected until its inclusion in the section of 'Surrealist Poems' in ***Collected Poems, 1988***, but in nine paragraphs instead of the original eight; nor is it prefaced, as in January 1936, by the following in parenthesis:

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[155] He told Lucien Jenkins that he joined the C.P. in 1935 at nineteen 'because I thought that was the only way to struggle against Mosley who seemed to be in the ascendant at that time, and because friends of mine were members and teased me into being one'. *Stand* Interview, op.cit., p.21.

[156] *Janus* (January 1936).

'[Simulation of Paranoia: Acute Mania, Delirium of Interpretation, Delusions of Grandeur.]' Gascoyne did remark, however, that:

> The longest piece [of the prose poems], "The Great Day", was obviously written in emulation of the "automatic" texts in *L'Immaculée Conception*, produced in collaboration by Breton and Eluard [1930] with the intention of simulating various types of mental disorder. Paranoia would appear to be the most easily imitable of such derangements (*INCP*, p.xvi).

As I pointed out earlier, Gascoyne had purchased a copy of *L'Immaculée Conception* in Paris in December of 1933 and brought it back to London with him. Before that 'momentous' first visit to the French capital, he had studied the translated texts, which made up the 'Surrealism and Madness' section of the September 1932 issue of *This Quarter*. These included Breton's article 'The Treatment of Mental Disease and Surrealism',[157] and passages from three of the five essays by Breton and Eluard which form the section 'The Possessions' in *The Immaculate Conception*: 'Simulation of Mental Disability Essayed'; 'Simulation of General Paralysis Essayed'; 'Simulation of the Delirium of Interpretation Essayed'. Part of Henri Baranger's 'Surrealism in 1931' effectively provides a preface to Samuel Beckett's translation of 'The Possessions'. He asks:

> Is it not possible experimentally by a simple play of the mind, to attain to the same result attained in psychoses and neuroses? May one not succeed in 'systematizing confusion', as Salvador Dalí puts it, 'and so assist the total discrediting of the world of reality'?
>
> It is in reply to these questions that André Breton and Paul Eluard have supplied in their latest work, *The Immaculate Conception*, some extremely remarkable simulations of mental feebleness, acute mania,, general paralysis, interpretational delirium, and *dementia praecox*...In having done this, they have given a proof of the omnipotence of mind and provided an effective remedy to the everyday life which an idiotic pragmatism is seeking to deify... (*TQSN*, p.117).

It is known that the titles of the passages that make up 'The Possessions' preceded the texts themselves, which are 'automatic' but in a different way, as Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron suggests.[158] In their preface to 'The Possessions', Breton and Eluard state their

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[157] Breton worked with traumatized soldiers during the first World War as part of his medico-psychiatric training, strongly influenced by Freudian theory.

[158] 'Toward a New Definition of Automatism: *L'Immaculée Conception*', in *Dada/Surrealism* No.17 (University of Iowa, 1988), (ed.) Anna Balakian. Chénieux-Gendron asks if it is an automatic text. 'How

> aim to prove that the mind of a normal person when *poetically* primed is capable of reproducing the main features of the most paradoxical and eccentric verbal expressions and that it is possible for such a mind to assume at will the characteristic ideas of delirium without suffering any lasting disturbance, or compromising in any way its own *faculty* for mental equilibrium. [...] We are happy to allow these pages which were composed with a certain intent to cause confusion, to be compared with the other pages in this book, and others defined as Surrealist.[159]

Antony Melville discusses the thesis of the psychiatrist, Alain Rauzy, who shows in his study of *L'Immaculée Conception*,[160] how 'the maniac's verbal pattern indicates "the desire to be recognized" which appears in the form of "Addresses"; chains of associations of words or ideas, based on puns or assonance, with occasional apparently logical sections "amid the extravagance"'. Melville remarks that Rauzy 'notes how [in the "Acute Mania" section] Breton and Eluard's text mimics profoundly "the maniac's mode of thought, where buffoonery, which constantly demands an audience, in fact only serves to dress up in a multi-coloured but patched-up costume, an intolerable moral disarray, which is visible through the holes"'.[161]

'The Great Day' is, in effect, a simulation of the simulations of Breton and Eluard; where their five separate 'essays' or sections are collectively entitled 'The Possessions', Gascoyne's prose poem represents a conflation of three of them, as the previously quoted prefatory note in parenthesis indicated in *Janus* (January 1936).

He provides a Surrealist gloss in this extended hallucinatory passage using the voice of difference as his narrator, driven by acute awareness of an audience, appealing to the eye and the ear, and acknowledging a need for precision and a clarity of perception that borders on the obsessive; and not just in relation to time: 'at the hour when'; 'precisely at the hour of the one-o'clock séances and balloon-course meetings'; 'it was one o'clock'; 'I went out when the cock was crowing'. The speaker is institutionalized

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can it be automatic, divided as it is into three large movements of continuous prose: ("L'Homme," "Les Possessions," "Les Médiations") and a final, aphoristic segment, "Le jugement originel"?' p.75.

[159] *The Immaculate Conception*, trans. Jon Graham (London: Atlas Press, 1990), pp.47-8. In an 'Insert' to the whole text, Breton & Eluard declare: 'The original wish to make simulations of deliria, categorized or otherwise, will have not only the appreciable advantage of bringing to light unforeseen and totally new poetic forms, but also the transcendent effect of sanctioning in an exemplary didactic manner, the free categories of thought which culminate in mental derangement' (Ibid. p.25).

[160] 'A propos de *L'Immaculée conception* d'André Breton et Paul Eluard', Contribution à l'étude des rapports du Surréalisme et de la psychiatrie (Faculté de Médecine de l'Université de Paris, 1970).

[161] Melville, 'Introduction' to Jon Graham's translation, pp.13-14.

(he mentions 'my family ward' and 'the warden's room'); he employs the past tense in his conversational 'address' with its clear narrative thread indicating the passage of time from the moment of waking until nightfall: 'When everything was once more as clear and peaceful as the falling rain'; 'and then'; 'Then the bed started to go up and down'; 'I sat up there and then'; 'After that'; 'When I went out in the evening'; 'then we went to choose the flowers [...] And the phosphorescent night began to fall'; 'And now it is time for me to end'. The reader also notes a near-pathological and incantatory use of similes introduced by the connective 'like', six in the second section, six again in the fifth, two in the sixth. There is an accumulation of buttonholing linguistic patterns: 'it was indeed very beautiful' (almost an echo of Eliot's J. Alfred Prufrock)[162] ; ''But I'm afraid you'll hardly believe me'; 'Were I to describe to you all the details'; 'Imagine it'; 'as you will well understand'. We notice, too, the placing of stress unexpectedly on words which might seem to the reader/listener trivial in their context: '*there*'; '*drinking oxygen*'; 'end', '*come to* an end'.

In Breton and Eluard's 'Attempted Simulation of Acute Mania', the present tense alternates with the past, and the tone is conversational, the content more discontinuous. Women in this text 'are small hands in Paris, big hands in the country. They swallow the sparrows in the Luxembourg gardens.' (Graham trans. p.56). However, in 'The Great Day', the speaker here describes, with characteristic compulsive repetition, a meeting with she

> upon whom my heart had been set since that marvellous sunset long long years ago when my heart was still a captive beating its pitiful wings [...] her mouth was like a beautiful garden full of flowers and full of bronze flowers and beautiful flowers like medals [...] She told me she could never be mine for she was married to a leper [...] it was she whose blood I had wanted to feel pulsing beneath my own, and now she refused to open her veins for me! My passion was so frightful that I might have spat right in her face [...].

The fifth paragraph seems to offer evidence of the 'omnipotence of mind' to which Baranger refers. Here begins a visionary experience which recalls Eugen Bleuler's

[162] 'And indeed there will be time', repeated twice. T.S. Eliot's speaker or mask, and Gascoyne's, too, record a mental rather than a physical journey.

comment on paranoia in his *Textbook of Psychiatry*,[163] 'a condition he felt resulted from "an exalted feeling of self" opposed by a repressed "feeling of insufficiency"':

> I stretched out my hands and they went sliding far away out over the multitudinous seas whose voices came to me like the sound of chariots and firearms roaring and terrible chariots roaring and terrible chariots grinding the limbs of the helpless Christians to powder. Then the bed started to go up and down [...].

It is in the following section that the speaker demonstrates his feeling of empowerment, and 'delusions of grandeur':

> But what am I saying? They thought they could scratch me with their tigers' claws and their eagles' talons, the wretches, they thought they could scratch my eyes out, but they weren't going to get away with it so easily. I lifted my imperious hand, I whose hands and feet are the very seal of all that is powerful and triumphant in this miserable world where the flowers only grow to please me, I lifted my iron hand and it became a sword and sceptre against all the wicked and unruly tongues that were clacking in the caverns in the valley of the shadow of death. My breathing became like the wind of the great tempest and I felt my body growing to stupendous size and the blinding light was like organs playing [...]

There is something almost biblical in the phraseology, with its echoes of Old Testament accounts of apocalyptic events, which relates directly to some of the language employed in the previous quotation.

In the Introduction to his *Voices of Madness: Four Pamphlets 1683-1796*, Allan Ingram points to the texts with their focus 'unashamedly on individual experience [...] in the conviction that the integrity of the account will find sympathetic readers'. The function their writing 'was being made to serve,' he argues, was 'as self-assertion and self-renewal'.[164] Gascoyne's own text seems to chime with these criteria applied to writing by the insane. There is a further parallel to be drawn here with his narrator who, like the four mad writers in Ingram's book 'aim[s] at a common engagement' with his readers: 'enter the reality of my life, understand my experience, think as I think, take me seriously. This is my voice: listen to it' (*VOM*, p.xiv). In the detail of the writing, Gascoyne, too, 'reinforce[s] the power of words and their regular arrangement, to set store

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[163] Quoted in Lisa M. Schwerdt, *Isherwood's Fiction: The Self and Technique* (London: Macmillan Press, 1989), p.196, n.8.

[164] A. Ingram (ed.) (Sutton Publishing, 1997), 'Introduction' p.xii. Further citings as (*VOM*).

by their communicative capacities,' thereby assuming readers 'who will read sanely' (*VOM*, p.xxii).

It seems both ironic and significant that Gascoyne was only nineteen when he wrote 'The Great Day', with no intimation of the three severe breakdowns he would suffer years later, the result of amphetamine abuse, depression, schizophrenia and paranoia. It is almost as if there is, quite unconsciously, more than mere simulation, more than the reflection of careful reading of Surrealist 'automatic' texts, in his sensitivity to states of mental instability.[165] Just over a year later he would visit Antonia White's analyst, and in October 1938 begin attending sessions with Pierre Jean Jouve's psychoanalyst wife, Blanche Reverchon.

'Phantasmagoria' was written[166] 'primarily as a *divertissement*, [...] the first Surrealist poem I have produced since I decided a few years ago, to abandon the "Surrealist" technique and general approach to poetry. It will probably be my last poem of this sort.' Gascoyne wrote 'Phantasmagoria' in 1939, after his return from Paris when 'I was no longer writing poetry classifiable as Surrealist' (*INCP*, p.xvii). As early as October 1934 when, unlike Auden, Spender and MacNeice he had replied to the *New Verse* 'Inquiry', his response to question four, 'Have you been influenced by Freud and how do you regard him?' was as follows:

> I have never been directly influenced by Freud in my poetry, but I have been indirectly influenced by him through the Surrealists. To give

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[165] He told Lucien Jenkins: 'I had been mad in France once and I was about to go mad in England [...] I went off my head in London.': *Stand* Interview, op.cit., p.25. He has talked about two bizarre incidents in particular, the first when he tried to get into Buckingham Palace at half-past eight one morning. 'A guard at the gates wouldn't let me in so I slapped his face. I was seized and interrogated, but they were surprisingly polite to me. All the time there was a second self which retained complete lucidity, recording it all.' The second occasion was in Paris in 1964. 'I tried to get into the Elysée to see De Gaulle. I was set upon in the entrance to the Elysée Palace. I tried to explain that I had a mission to see De Gaulle. These *Babus*, great big tough men, four of them, began to close in on me and I began to struggle.' He was taken to the nearest gendarmerie where he was kept for the whole afternoon. He even slapped the faces of two British consulate officials who had come to try to get him out, and he found himself in hospital in a straitjacket. (Ibid.).

[166] Prefatory note to a selection of his poems in *Poets of Tomorrow*, Third Selection (Hogarth Press, 1942), p.25. 'A young friend of friends [Margaret Westaway, a friend of the Shaw-Lawrence family who lived close by in Teddington and Richmond] insisted that I should write a poem especially for her. Unable to produce a suitable poem to order, I proceeded to employ the formula of quasi-automatism I had been accustomed to use during four previous years. The deliberate repetition of such a motif as a little black town on the edge of the sea is a device I would not formerly have allowed myself (except perhaps in the poem about sleep, "Unspoken"' (*INCP*,.xvii).

> oneself up at any time to writing poems without the control of the reason is, I imagine, to have in a way come under the influence of Freud. I no longer find this navel-gazing activity at all satisfying. The Surrealists themselves have a definite justification for writing in this way, but for an English poet with continually growing political convictions it must soon become impossible (No.11, p.13).

Raine provides a gloss on this in her essay on Gascoyne: 'The reason he gives is significant: it is not, as might be thought, because [Surrealism or "navel-gazing"] is inadequate to the requirements of the imagination.' He had 'presumably completed' ***A Short Survey of Surrealism*** 'when he put Surrealism behind him' (*DGDAS*, p.46). My feeling is that she is too literal-minded in her assumption, and the reality of his contributions to reviews and magazines in the next two years, particularly *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*, his unpublished poems in the notebooks in the British Library, some of which I have persuaded him to publish, even his talk to the Oxford Union in December 1936, would seem to belie the force of his declaration in *New Verse*. I prefer A.T. Tolley's argument: 'It seems likely that in 1934, Gascoyne had become disillusioned with the automatic aspect of Surrealist writing, and had begun to write the more controlled poems in ***Man's Life is This Meat*** - poems a little reminiscent of the work of Paul Eluard.'[167]

After the 1942 introductory note to 'Phantasmagoria', he had added a final paragraph, dissociating himself once again at that time from Surrealism:

> I feel that poetry of the 'magical' category - product of sheer imagination, unrestricted by pure design and untempered by the wisdom of disillusionment - may be more stimulating, more immediately satisfying to write; but in the long run is probably less rewarding, less consoling, than that resulting from conflict between the instinctive poetic impulse and the impersonal discipline, the unadorned sobriety of realistic 'sense'.[168]

Robin Skelton is fairly critical of Surrealist poetry in Britain. '[...] Surrealism made its contribution more in terms of translations than in original English poems. [...] Surrealism [...] remained very much a continental affair. It provided the thirties men with some fresh techniques. A few outright Surrealist poems were achieved' (*RSPT*, p.33). I prefer to relate this last comment specifically to Gascoyne's very real accomplishment in

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[167] *The Poetry of the Thirties* (London: Gollancz, 1975), p.235.
[168] Prefatory note in *Poets of Tomorrow*, p.25.

the published, uncollected (and unpublished poems) from what was a prolific Surrealist phase: 'the only English poems of any merit inspired by the movement,' in John Press's view.[169]

Preferring to concentrate on his mature poetry, Kathleen Raine is fairly dismissive of some of the early work: 'Mr Gascoyne wrote a few poems in this [Surrealist] style. In "The Cubical Domes' and 'Rites of Hysteria" images sprawl in monstrous - and derivative - novelty' (*DGDAS*, p.44). Paul C. Ray says of the designated poems in ***Man's Life is This Meat*** that 'The impression they create is that if they are Surrealist, they are so at one remove. They seem, rather than "pure psychic automatism" issuing in words, to be verbal transcriptions of images seen - and not all of these seen below the level of waking consciousness' (*SME*, p.169).

Adrian Caesar, on the other hand, while acknowledging that in some poems, such as 'The Rites of Hysteria', lists of images 'resist any but the most empathic and intuitive interpretation' (*DLS*, p.182), points to the 'immense pressure of feeling' in 'Charity Week' with 'nothing slick or self-consciously clever,' and 'a telling absence of irony.' He notes that 'the development of Gascoyne's style from 1936 onwards is prefigured' in poems like 'Yves Tanguy' and 'Charity Week' 'Here abstract nouns are introduced to support imagery rendered in highly emotional language' (p.184). He rightly emphasizes that 'It is in terms of "feeling" that Gascoyne increasingly sought to define his work against that of other poets, as he progressed away from Communism and Surrealism towards a radical Christianity' (ibid.).

J.H. Matthews appreciates the 'compelling attraction' exerted for those like Gascoyne [and Hugh Sykes Davies] 'caught up in their first enthusiasm for Surrealism', and finds that 'some of its images [in ***Man's Life is This Meat***] are memorable. [...]' He echoes Caesar's point: 'At times the tone of his verse achieves an intensity that takes it out of the category of the verbal exercise' (*CLS1*, pp.65,66).

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[169] *Rule and Energy: Trends in British Poetry since the Second World War* (O.U.P., 1963), p.82.

Michel Rémy's response as a Frenchman to the Surrealist poems is particularly interesting and significant: 'To provoke "presences" in order to highlight their absences, to challenge the laws of language, hence of thought, these were, *as in France* [my emphasis], the essential gestures of English Surrealist texts as revealed in Gascoyne's earliest poems' (*LEA*, p.13). Rémy remarks that 'All the Surrealist texts of the first section of ***Collected Poems*** (1965) express between them the complete undifferentiation between the thought that gave rise to them and the very act of writing.' Echoing Gascoyne,[170] he goes on to assert that all these Surrealist poems inscribe a distance in themselves between what he has written [he cites 'The Last Head', 'Salvador Dalí' and 'Yves Tanguy' where the "I" or "me" or "my" occupy a strangely passive position], but also between the poet and us' (*DGUI*, p.82, my translation).

It is very clear now when speaking with Gascoyne that he is not happy to find himself labelled 'the Surrealist poet'. For him Surrealism constituted a phase in his development as a young man on the way to discovering his own mature poetic voice.[171] As a practitioner, he consciously moved away from Surrealism in 1937, though it is unarguable that some of the imagery in the later collection, ***Poems 1937-42***, for example, stems directly from his Surrealist perception and writing experience, and he still retains today more than a sneaking sympathy for the movement. Asked by Michel Rémy about the importance of Surrealism, he replied: 'It's very great. Never for a moment have I regretted taking part in the movement, but I could not have remained in it for long, like many others who left it, with the exception, indeed, of Péret...I think the spirit of Surrealism is eternal.'[172]

I enjoyed a number of conversations with Rémy over a period of two days in 1996 when we discussed Gascoyne at some length. We agreed that it is questionable whether the poet did in reality abjure Surrealism after 1937. It is indisputable that he found both

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[170] This is very much in accord with Gascoyne's own view, expressed in his Oxford talk, where he discusses the lyrical impulse as 'thought that escapes from the conscious control of the reason and proceeds on its own way and of its own impulse, so that the poet is afterwards surprised to find what he has written.' (Quoted earlier in the text of this chapter).

[171] 'But it is a very brief period in my life belonging to the Surrealist Movement, writing Surrealist poetry. I disliked the label "Surrealist Poet" which was hung around my neck for years and years, long after I had stopped writing automatically.' *Stand* interview, op. cit.,p.23.

[172] *Temenos* interview, op. cit., pp.270-1.

Jouve, and the spiritual that was missing from Surrealism because it was anathema to the movement, and that he tried to relate to Christianity. However, there are unequivocally, tensions in his poetry from this time, partly because he was still drawn towards Surrealism; but Surrealism which is synonymous with liberation is circumscribed by his search for the spiritual. Further tension is fuelled by his awareness of the Void looming beneath him, and by anxiety about his sexuality (or what he thought was his bi-sexuality) which he attempted to resolve through the notion of androgyny.

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Grevel Lindop has suggested that the poems of Gascoyne's Surrealist phase 'though bizarre in their imagery, seem tinged with horror at the European political situation and with an unfocused sense of spiritual need'.[173] This last point is well taken. Gascoyne told Rémy, 'I had to begin by separating myself from Surrealism in order to develop what was in me' (*DGUI*, p.270). Adrian Caesar contends with some acuity that Gascoyne 'increasingly came to believe that a "spiritual revolution" was required, rather than the revolution of the proletariat. As a corollary, he sought a poetry which could embody such a visionary possibility' (*DLS*, p.185).

[173] 'Poetry in the 1930s and 1940s', in Martin Dodsworth (ed.), *The Penguin History of Literature*, The Twentieth Century (Penguin Books, 1994), p.294.

3

'DEPARTURE ON A NEW QUEST'

Versions/Visions of Madness:

Hölderlin, Jouve, and a crisis of language

'The abyss is our element. Flung into it ... we sprout wings.' **(Chestov)**

While Franz Kafka's novels filtered into the consciousness of several writers during the 1930s in this country, Friedrich Hölderlin's poetry cast a compelling shadow in England (and on the Continent) during that decade on the work of others, notably W.H. Auden, Samuel Beckett, Edwin Muir, Stephen Spender, as well as David Gascoyne.

Peter Levi reviewed the ***Selected Poems*** (Enitharmon Press 1994) for *Agenda*. In the course of examining Gascoyne's work and development as a poet he writes, 'The turning point and the book I most wish I had is ***Hölderlin's Madness*** (1938) at the time of his discovery of that great poet in Jouve's 1930 translation, for which when he found it (in 1937) David at about twenty-one was exactly ripe.'[1]

Dissatisfaction with Surrealism[2] and the facility with which he had been able to produce poems in that mode, together with an apparently developing interest in politics, no doubt gave rise to the anguished outburst in Gascoyne's journal on September 22nd 1936: 'I have had to admit that *nothing* I have written so far is of the least value!' (*CJS*, p.10). Kathleen Raine reads it differently, emphasizing that the dissatisfaction stemmed rather from 'the inadequacy of a theory of inspiration which did not go beyond psychic autonomy' (*DGDAS*, p.54).

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1 Op. cit., Vol.32, Nos.3-4, p.288.

2 Grevel Lindop states that 'His [Gascoyne's] notion of Surrealism was an *austere* [my emphasis] one, and it led him to the study of European poets of the irrational and visionary, notably Hölderlin [...].' See Martin Dodsworth (ed.), *The Penguin History of Literature.* The Twentieth Century (Penguin Books, 1994), p.294. Can the adjective 'austere' be justified here? No one knew better than Gascoyne that to be a practitioner, to employ the Surrealist techniques, was truly to liberate the imagination. Austerity and total freedom of language do not go together; they are not symbiotic, but mutually exclusive.

The following year was to be crucial in his development and would effect a change in his poetry and his personal philosophy. His only published short story, 'Death of an Explorer', appeared in March 1937 in the anthology *Under Thirty*, with an autobiographical preface of four paragraphs. In the third he wrote:

> I no longer have any desire to be connected with any particular group, ideology, or programme, but wish to be entirely free to develop my own individual preoccupations, which centre round the inner problem of modern man: the necessity for *greater consciousness of himself*: as a social being, as a psychological being and as a spiritual being – a problem too great to be perceived from a single, fixed point of view.[3]

Gascoyne's journal entry for 24.1X.37 reads: 'Until I wrote ***Hölderlin's Madness*** a few days ago, I had scarcely written poetry of any kind for well over a year. (The last poem I wrote, summer 1936, the "Elegiac Stanzas in Memory of Alban Berg", was perhaps a vague, only semi-successful attempt to find a new direction. I may now rewrite it...).'[4] He continues:

> Anything of the kind I may write from now on will be entirely different: no more themeless improvisation, no more autonomous lyricism, no more 'pure' effect. I want depth, solidarity, experience. Poetry that will say something definite. Emotion, a raised voice, but clear and coherent speech' (*CJS*, p.129).

That autumn, quite by chance, he had found in a second-hand bookseller's box on the *quais* a copy of *Poèmes de la folie de Hölderlin*,[5] translated by Pierre Jean Jouve and Pierre Klossowski, brother of the painter Balthus [Gascoyne had no German, and his own versions were 'made with the help of two German friends who were living in Paris at the time' [6]]. This

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[3] (ed.) Michael Harrison (London: Rich & Cowan Ltd., 1937), p.172.

[4] This English version (which I have put together from two notebooks in the British Library and another section I found in 1997 in the Berg Collection in the New York Public Library) was deemed 'unsatisfactory' by the poet. He later produced in French *Strophes Elégiaques: à la Mémoire d'Alban Berg, 1885-1935*, first published in *Cahiers du Sud* (Marseilles), No.220, (janvier 1940), pp.49-52, then reprinted in ***Poems 1937-42*** (Poetry London Editions, 1943).

[5] (Paris: J.O. Fourcade, 1930). The poems were written after the onset of the German poet's so-called madness. The 'Avant-propos' or preface to this text, which Gascoyne translated in the early 1980s, 'Concerning the Poems of Hölderlin's Madness', is by Bernard Groethuysen, philosophical writer, b. 1880s. In one of the sections of *Les Noces* (1931), 'La Symphonie à Dieu', Jouve imitated the 'spaced-out' form of writing employed in some of the late Hölderlin poems and fragments. The French translation of 'Tinian' in *Poèmes de la folie de Hölderlin* reappears in *Les Noces* under the title 'Voyageurs dans un paysage'/'Travellers in a landscape' in the section 'Le Père de la terre'.

[6] From David Gascoyne, 'A Paris, en 1937...' in *L'Autre* (juin 1992), Jouve no., p.11. My translation.

> marked a turning point in my approach to poetry. I had not so much become disillusioned with Surrealism as begun to wish to explore other territories than the sub- or unconscious, the oneiric and the aleatory. Jouve's Hölderlin translations led not only to my essay, poems, and translation published by Dent the following year as ***Hölderlin's Madness***,[7] but to an excited first reading of Jouve's own poetry and prose, and before long to an acquaintance with the poet and his psychiatrist wife that was to last nearly thirty years' (*INCP*, p.xvii).

Jouve asked Gascoyne to visit him: 'I began to go to his Thursday evenings.[8] His wife was a Freudian analyst.' Amongst his literary and philosophical friends and acquaintances, there were a number of Blanche Reverchon's patients 'which was not very orthodox.' Although Jouve was not a member of the Surrealist group, 'there was the connection,' says Gascoyne, 'that he too used the unconscious as a source of poetry. But at the same time there was a spiritual dimension which is lacking in Surrealist poetry' (*Stand* interview, pp.21-2). Gascoyne had discovered both Jouve and Hölderlin.

Hölderlin died in 1843, almost halfway through the nineteenth century, but belonged essentially to the Classical period of German literature, significant for its involvement with the culture of Greek antiquity. His intense engagement with neo-Hellenism makes him a problematic figure, as Corbet Stewart explains:

> partly because his profoundly personal preoccupation with Greek religion and civilization clashed with the imperatives of his pietistic upbringing and partly because his vision of Greece made him more acutely aware of the disharmonies of his own time. The result is a poetry in which a deep sense of reverence is combined, in varying degrees, with a kind of pain: the poet's dream of unity and wholeness

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[7] Published by J.M. Dent & Sons in May, 1938 at 5s. There is a prefatory essay (untitled) of 14 pages. Further citings as (*HM*). There seems to have been a revival of interest in Hölderlin in 1938 in England: Edwin Muir's essay on the German poet appeared in *New Verse* 30, (Summer); Ronald Peacock's study, *Hölderlin*, was published by Methuen & Co. that year, cited as (*RPH*); in 1936, three translations of Hölderlin poems by Stephen Spender were included in John Lehmann's *New Writing*, and his poem 'Hölderlin's Old Age' was in *The Year's Poetry 1937*, (eds.) D. Kilham Roberts & Geoffrey Grigson (The Bodley Head), p.101. By the mid-thirties, according to James Knowlson, 'Samuel Beckett was reading widely in German (Goethe and Hölderlin most obviously)': *Damned to Fame*. The Life of Samuel Beckett (Bloomsbury, 1996), p.226. His poem, 'Dieppe' draws on a passage from Hölderlin's 'Der Spaziergang'/'The Walk' according to the notes in *Samuel Beckett: Collected Poems in English and French* (John Calder, 1977), p.143. Auden's 'exotic borrowings' in the thirties from Hölderlin are noted by Edward Mendelson in *Early Auden* (Faber & Faber, 1981), pp.44, 212, 354. During the war, in 1943, Editions Poetry London brought out the first of Michael Hamburger's monumental studies and translations of the German poet, *Poems of Hölderlin* (Nicholson & Watson), hereafter (*MHPOH*). The revised edition of his complete bi-lingual *Friedrich Hölderlin: Poems and Fragments*, first published in 1966 (Routledge & Kegan Paul) to be cited as (*MHFH*), came out in 1980 (Cambridge University Press), followed by the third edition in 1994 (Anvil Press Poetry). Since then, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Selected Poems and Fragments* has appeared in the Penguin Classics series (1998).

[8] He met Jean Wahl, Gabriel Marcel, Pierre Leyris and Balthus there: *L'Autre*, ibid.

> being constantly countered by his experience of separation and division.[9]

On 30.V.38, Gascoyne had written in his journal that the eight months' period in Paris from August 1937 until the end of March 1938 had 'brought a definite enrichment and an *approfondissement* I did not have before, - a greater understanding of solitude, poverty and despair, and of the nature of human relationships. I wrote ***Hölderlin's Madness*** and "Despair Has Wings"' (*CJS*, p.156).[10]

It is not surprising that he felt he had found a kindred spirit in Hölderlin. I talked with Michel Rémy about Gascoyne's coming to terms with his homosexuality which seems to reflect and to relate directly to, his interest in marginal figures like Maister Eckhardt, Jacob Boehme, Heidegger's existentialism rather than Sartre's; and Hölderlin. There is a clear affinity between the two in their double vision: the conflation of both private and external worlds in their poetry. Stewart says of Hölderlin that 'there is no disjunction between private experience and the experience of history; he does not have one voice for personal emotion and another for historical or cultural reflection: the one is part of the other' (*CSH*, p.297).

Gascoyne's engagement with Hölderlin was taking place at another level, that which is cogently expressed by Michael Hamburger who has devoted so much of his working life to the German poet and to bringing his poetry to a wider, non-German-speaking audience: 'Hölderlin [...] quite consciously worked for a poetry as "alive" as possible, in which the very processes of thinking and feeling and imagining are enacted'. Hamburger also quotes Hölderlin's definition of lyrical poetry: 'the metaphor of a feeling'.[11]

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[9] Entry in *Makers of Nineteenth Century Culture 1800-1914* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), p.296.

[10] The title derives from both Chestov and Jouve. Chestov wrote: 'The abyss is our element. Flung into it [...] we sprout wings'. Quoted by Brian Merrikin-Hill in *Temenos* 7 (1986) p.273. The following lines by Jouve: 'Le désespoir a des ailes/ L'amour a pour aile nacré/ Le désespoir/ Les sociétés peuvent changer' appear as the epigraph to Gascoyne's sequence *Miserere*.

[11] *The Truth of Poetry* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968; Anvil Press, 1996), pp.24 & 233.

There is, too, a further connection between the two poets, that of madness. Gascoyne's preface, 'somewhat melodramatic', according to Edwin Muir,[12] takes up this point early: 'He [Hölderlin] was one of the most thorough-going of romantics, because he went mad, and madness is the logical development of romanticism; and he went beyond romanticism, because his poetry is stronger than despair, and reaches into the future and the light' (*HM*, p.3). Gascoyne then brings out another significant link: 'It is the parallel with Arthur Rimbaud, among all these poets [in the preceding paragraph he has referred to Blake, Beddoes, Coleridge, Rimbaud and "another madman", Gerard de Nerval], that strikes me most. The placing together of the names of Hölderlin and Rimbaud gives rise to a curious reflection' (*HM*, p.10). At this point, it seems appropriate to point out that Gascoyne had been engaged on his own Rimbaud project, 'Diabolic Angel', for some time. When 'Orpheus in the Underworld', one of his own poems interpolated in the translations, was published in May 1938[13] in Gwendolen Murphy's anthology *The Modern Poet*,[14] a biographical note explained: 'He is at present working on a biography of Arthur Rimbaud' (p.202). More than two months later, on 11th August, a journal entry reads, 'Have decided to write my Rimbaud book in the form of a novel' (*CJS*, p.171).[15] Both Hölderlin and Rimbaud, Gascoyne writes in his preface

> belonged to the tradition of the *seer*. That is to say that their *ars poetica* was an offspring of the Platonic doctrine of inspiration. They believed the poet to be capable of penetrating to a secret world and of receiving the dictation of a transcendental inner voice. 'Der Dichter ein Seher': 'Je dis qu'il faut être *voyant*, se faire *voyant*' (p.10).
>
> For Hölderlin, as for almost all the romantics of his period [...], and for Rimbaud [...], the writing of poetry was something far more than the act of composition; rather was it an activity by means of which it was possible to attain to hitherto unknown degrees of consciousness, a sort of rite, entailing the highest *metaphysical* [my italics] implications and with a sort of non-Euclidean logic of its own (p.11).

This is an assertion of considerable importance, particularly at this time, pointing up as it does that his change of direction is in effect a volte-face; here is corroboration that his

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[12] In his review, 'German Poetry. Studies by Three Authors', *The Scotsman* (June 13th 1938). Further citings as (*EMTS*).

[13] Murphy claims that this is its first publication, but I'm not convinced that she was correct: the poem appeared in *The New Statesman and Nation* on March 12 1938, p.415.

[14] (Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd.), poem no.104, pp.142-143. Further citings as *(TMP)*.

[15] The book, due for publication in 1938, was never written. The three chapters that were completed have been lost.

own approach to poetry now centres on the conscious and the metaphysical rather than on the un-/sub-conscious and the illogic of the practising Surrealist.

As A.T. Tolley states, 'It is with such a secret world that Gascoyne evidently felt his poetry to belong after 1937' (*TPT*, p.236). What does the poet-seer who penetrates to that secret world see? Gascoyne quotes André Gide's response, 'Paradise!' (*HM*, p.11), but argues that there is a price to be paid by the poet who catches even a glimpse of Paradise, 'for his undertaking is an attempt to transgress the laws of man's universe,' and he is 'guilty of a promethean crime. Rimbaud, more than Hölderlin, was aware of this.' Nevertheless, Gascoyne suggests that though less aware of the nature and consequences of his poetic undertaking, the German poet 'must have known, in brief flashes of intuition, in what direction his path was leading him,' and quotes by way of illustration 'the mysterious broken phrase' at the end of the poem 'Form and Spirit': 'thou shalt go into the flames'. Roger Cardinal discusses the opening fifteen lines of the poem 'Patmos' in his *Figures of Reality*, and ends his analysis as follows: 'for Hölderlin remains, despite his apparent simplicities, essentially a poet of *oracular darkness* [my emphasis], the author of a poetry which is at once "near/And hard to grasp"'.[16] His term, 'oracular darkness' chimes with Gascoyne's explanation to Lucien Jenkins of 'the mantic idea in poetry' and the Victor Hugo poem, 'Ce que dit la bouche d'ombre' [the mouth of shadow]: 'the poet is a mask through whom words from beyond come. Baudelaire is an example and Rimbaud and Mallarmé' (*Stand* interview, p.21).[17]

'By the time he had reached the unearthly illumination of his last poems,' writes Gascoyne near the end of his preface, 'Hölderlin's madness had become quite incurable' (*HM*, pp.12-13). A note follows the bibliography at the end of Ronald Peacock's study of Hölderlin in which he comments on the publication of Gascoyne's ***Hölderlin's Madness*** earlier that same year, and 'the brief introduction about Hölderlin's life and his significance as a "romantic" poet for the present-day "Surrealists"' (*RPH*, p.178). Peacock misrepresents Gascoyne here: nowhere in his introduction does Gascoyne make this direct link. He only mentions at the end of his opening paragraph 'the great Romantic

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[16] (Croom Helm 1981), p.74. He is quoting here the first two lines of the poem.

[17] Interestingly, 'La bouche d'ombre' is one of three poems by Jouve included in the Surrealist review *Minotaure* 6, (hiver 1935).

movement [in Germany], and in England, a lesser reflection, of the Lakeland school of poets and their successors. (While today, perhaps, we see the appearance of the Surrealist movement in France; and in England...' (*HM*, p.1). Nor does Hölderlin's name appear in that paragraph. Peacock continues: 'The title and tendency indicate frankly that to this way of thought Hölderlin's madness is more important than his sanity' (p.178). If there is an implied criticism in this observation it is hardly justified by the facts. It is already established that Gascoyne had no German and that his Hölderlin text was, in effect, the French translation of the poems of the last period; the parameters were already drawn for him.

Nevertheless, there is an important point at issue here with regard to the poems that belong to the periods of Hölderlin's sanity and madness, and one which Michael Hamburger underscores with the acuity and knowledge which stem from the closeness of his relationship with Hölderlin's work and his scholarship over so many years. He writes of the German poet's 'new insights into the nature of ancient and modern poetry. The same insights that caused Hölderlin to abandon certain of his works drove him on to new modes and possibilities of poetic utterance so daring as to anticipate the stylistic innovations'.[18] Then he goes on:

> This aspect of Hölderlin's achievement needs to be stressed because of the persistence of a view of him that attributes more importance to his madness than to his artistry and his intellectual power. Nothing could be more wrong, for instance, than W.H. Auden's pronouncement: 'Translation also favours poets like Hölderlin and Smart, who were dotty, for their dislocation of normal processes of thinking are the result of their dottiness not their language, and sound equally surprising in any [...].

Hamburger emphasizes that the German poet was never 'dotty', that 'when his considerable intellectual powers declined, so did his technical inventiveness and his stylistic innovations'.[19]

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[18] Hamburger had written earlier that 'It is interesting and disturbing to reflect that it is in the poems and fragments written when his schizophrenia was passing into its final phase that Hölderlin strikes us as most modern.' In the previous paragraph, Hamburger refers to the fragment 'As on a Holiday': 'one of the purest lyrical poems ever written, and one that anticipates both the Symbolist and the Imagist revolutions in poetry' (*MHFH*, p.15).

[19] 'Hölderlin' in *Art as Second Nature: occasional pieces 1950-74* (Carcanet New Press, 1975), pp.57-8. Hamburger wrote to me on 25th April 1998, enclosing a photocopy from one of his publications on the German poet: he was helping me to identify the source of the draft of an unpublished version of a Hölderlin poem by Gascoyne which I found in a notebook in the British Library. Included in the text of

He had explained some thirty years earlier in his *Poems of Hölderlin* (1943) that 'The mental disorder which undermined Hölderlin's intellect was schizophrenia, [20] or dementia praecox, as it used to be called. He had always had the disposition of a schizophrenic,' he continues, 'but in the thirty-sixth year of his life the disease became acute and permanent' (*MHPOH*, p.76). Hölderlin's later schizophrenia, according to Hamburger, 'has been traced to the emotional tensions of his childhood and youth by several biographers and psychologists' (*MHFH*, p.1). In a letter to Peter Levi in 1986 he provides further information, while politely taking issue with Levi's suggestion that there was something 'deliberate about Hölderlin's madness':

> Recent research has shown that [...] the collapse of his former identity and concerns did not occur until he had been *treated* as a madman, dragged against his will into an institution whose methods of 'treatment' (torture) have now been studied and exposed. That institution killed quite a number of its patients. What was done to Hölderlin there was enough to have changed the character of a man far less sensitive, and one who had not already suffered the loss of the woman he loved and the frustration of all his other needs and ambitions.[21]

In his introduction to the *Poems of Hölderlin*, he refers to C.G. Jung who 'makes a very reasonable statement about the relationship of art to analytical psychology, and strictly limits the function of the psychologist who seeks to interpret a work of art.' Hamburger clearly appreciates Karl Jasper's pathological study of Hölderlin that

> deals with Hölderlin's illness as well as more recent discoveries about schizophrenia permit. Above all, he does not try to depreciate or explain away the singular beauty of Hölderlin's mature poetry by calling it the product of an insane mind: 'In the same way as a diseased oyster causes pearls to form, schizophrenic processes can allow unique spiritual works to be formed' (pp.76-7).

the photocopy is the following: 'Hölderlin's language and imagery in the late poems did become more and more common, more everyday, often to the point of a colloquialism far removed from the sublime or abstract diction of his beginnings.'

[20] More than a year after the publication of ***Hölderlin's Madness***, Gascoyne would write in his journal on 22.viii.39 of his 'completely detached and objective conviction to the effect that *"schizophrenia"* is one of the fundamental hallmarks of everything important that is happening in the modern exterior world, so that one ought surely not to avoid *insisting* on it. (Being definitely a schizo type, though, perhaps I am more inclined than I realized to exaggerate this)' (*CJS*, p.257).

[21] Dated Christmas Day, included as Appendix 2 to Levi's chapter, 'Visionary Poets' in his *The Art of Poetry*: the Oxford Lectures 1984-1989 (New Haven/London: Yale U.P., 1991), p.104. Further citings as (*TAPL*).

At the end of Gascoyne's preface to ***Hölderlin's Madness***, there is an important note:

> The poems which follow are not a translation of selected poems of Hölderlin, but a free adaptation, introduced and linked together by entirely original poems. The whole constitutes what may perhaps be regarded as a *persona* (p.14).

The last sentence, where 'persona' is emphasized by the author, is particularly significant, and serves to underline the feeling of kinship, the closeness of the bond between the two poets so clearly experienced by Gascoyne. In the translations and the four original poems, Gascoyne is conducting a dialectic between himself and Hölderlin: there is a kind of osmotic process in progress, in accord with his empathic response to and identification with the German poet.[22] I wrote to both Michael Hamburger and Peter Levi to sound out their response to my reading of Gascoyne's rapprochement with Hölderlin. Hamburger replied (letter dated 25.4.98):

> Your interpretation of David's relation to H. [sic] makes good sense to me; but it was a great disadvantage not to be able to read H. in the original. Hence his misunderstanding of H.'s diction, which was wholly unconventional in his time, as he knew and wrote. There was no high and low, sublime and common diction for H. in his visionary phase: both were one in that he resembles William Blake, who could be just as earthy - though dear Kathleen R.[aine] will not admit that.

Peter Levi's letter (7 May 1998) is also sympathetic to my proposition: 'I think your idea about the four interpolated poems is a very good one'.

Kathleen Raine makes an illuminating suggestion that Gascoyne's 'introduction [...] is in the nature of a new declaration of prophetic faith'. Neville Braybrooke seems to agree: referring to the poems Gascoyne was beginning to write and which would be collected as ***Poems 1937-42***, he argues that he 'became more apocalyptic. From now on he spoke with an orphic voice'.[23]

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[22] Perhaps intuition had a part to play: I have seen a presentation copy of *Hölderlin's Madness* from the author to John Arlott, inscribed in 1944. Gascoyne wrote: 'Entirely superceded [sic] by more recently published works, such as Michael Hamburger's and J.B. Leishmann's [sic] authoritative versions. The awful truth is, you see, that I don't really know a word of German, & all I ever understood of Hölderlin - if anything - was acquired solely *through the exercise of sheer, or mere, intuition*... [my emphasis]'

[23] Review of ***Selected Verse Translations***, *The Tablet* (21 September 1996), p.1129.

Raine maintains that 'The bridge by which he was able to pass so easily from Surrealism to Hölderlin was the theme of "madness"' (*DGDAS*, p.55). I have already registered as problematic the notion that Gascoyne simply stopped writing in a Surrealist manner at a given moment (or when he said he did), and I'm not convinced that the transition to which Raine refers was in any sense 'easy', however providential the discovery of Jouve[24] and thus of Hölderlin; although Jouve's Catholicism (aside from his interest in Freud), which is expressed in terms of a 'mystical religious intensity',[25] may well have opened up a new route from Surrealism to, at least, a broad Christianity, and the growing belief that the acute and frightening awareness of the Void could only be countered by religious faith.

Philip Gardner refers to Gascoyne reading Isherwood's *Lions and Shadows* (1938) early in 1939: 'he [Gascoyne] concluded that "one cannot properly deal with existence simply by being continually bland and matter-of-fact"' (*DLB*, p.144, & *CJS*, p.199). A few months earlier, Gascoyne had included this entry in his journal:

> Reiteration of the idea that the practice of magic (in poetry) involves 'damnation' Hölderlin goes mad; Rimbaud abandons writing, Lautréamont dies abnormally young): i.e. the poet's destiny is to risk madness despair and death for the sake of a possibility of redeeming existence by means of the secret power of the Word (*CJS*, p.199).

Rémy questioned Gascoyne in the *Temenos* interview: 'You say that to write creates the possibility of danger.' The reply is particularly relevant here:

> Yes, that is the theme of one of Heidegger's essential commentaries on Hölderlin, who referred to writing poetry as 'the most innocent of all occupations' but designated language on the other hand: 'most dangerous of possessions'.[26] To create is to take risks. Hölderlin wrote that 'God is near and difficult to grasp but danger strengthens the rescuing power' (opening of the poem 'Patmos'), and it is true that a hard winter will produce a good harvest. That seems pitiless,

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[24] Margaret Callender writes: 'Jouve's interest in Hölderlin extended to a share in translating the poems of madness in 1930, and it was doubtless the melancholy submissiveness of the German poet that attracted his attention, labouring to subordinate his personal doubts and anxieties to the soothing rhythm of the seasons, and recognizing for his poetry the incommensurability of vision and expression.' *The Poetry of Pierre Jean Jouve* (Manchester University Press, 1965), p.102.

[25] Philip Gardner, 'David Gascoyne' in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol.20: British Poets 1914-1945*, (ed.) Donald Stanford (Detroit, Michigan: Louisiana State University, Gale Research Co., 1983), p.144. Further citings as (*DLB*).

[26] *Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung* (1936).

> Neitzschean: perhaps, but the danger lies in that as a writer one sets in motion a renewal of vision, and one can come to grief' (p.270).[27]

Here, then, in 1938, is his own 'renewal of vision', and the attendant change of sensibility. If Hölderlin 'found his own poetic voice when he met Susette [Gontard],' as David Constantine suggests,[28] then Gascoyne began to find his when he discovered Jouve's translations of Hölderlin and met Jouve himself, then Benjamin Fondane after an exchange of letters.

Speaking of the German poet in his madness,[29] Gascoyne perceives that in each of these poems he has read in translation, 'Hölderlin creates a world: a world of extraordinary transparency - clear air and dazzling light. Everything stands out in light and shade, in height and depth. In movement, and yet timeless.[30] The images pass away, and yet Nature remains' (*HM*, pp.9-10). He is reminded of Hölderlin's near-contemporary, William Blake and the *Songs of Innocence*.

Francis Scarfe reviewed ***Hölderlin's Madness*** in the July number of Julian Symons's *Twentieth Century Verse* and welcomed the publication: 'In revealing us

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[27] Robin Skelton highlights another kind of danger: 'The poet who continually and persistently attempts to explore the darker portions of the human psyche, who deliberately, like Rimbaud, disorders his mind in order to perceive what the ordered, and safely enclosed, mind cannot perceive, is taking risks. We must, however, realize that the poet may not be able to help taking these risks.' *The Poet's Calling* (London/New York: Heinemann/Barnes & Noble, 1975), p.179.

[28] 'Introduction' to his translations, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Selected Poems* (Bloodaxe Books, 1990), p.9. Hölderlin was engaged by Jakob Gontard in Frankfurt as a tutor; as a member of the household, he came into daily contact with Gontard's wife, Susette. The couple fell in love. 'She became the Diotima of his poems and proof to him that ideal life was possible on earth.' p.9. He was forced to leave the house in September 1798 after Gontard discovered the liaison. Although they managed to see each other secretly for some time, a final separation was agreed in May 1800. Constantine's extensive critical biography, *Hölderlin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), is illuminating, dealing with the poet's relationship with Susette in considerably more detail, and providing a meaningful context for his sensitive commentaries on individual poems and whole works.

[29] Hölderlin was mentally deranged in June 1802 when he returned to Swabia; his beloved Susette Gontard died that same month. Between 1803 and 1806 he was looked after by his mother and a devoted friend. He spent eight months in a clinic in Tübingen after another serious breakdown, and was then discharged as incurable with three years to live in 1806. However, for the next thirty-six years until he died he was cared for by a carpenter and his family in a house on the banks of the Neckar.

[30] Edwin Muir makes a similar point about time in his 1938 essay: 'Hölderlin is particularly equivocal in his treatment of time; it is sometimes hard to tell whether he is writing about the past or the future, or an unchanging present. When he says "and blinded I sought/One that I knew", the statement is mysterious and arresting because though he sets out from contemporary Germany, he is speaking of ancient Greece. And because this brings the present and the past together, evoking a possibility of a new mode of perception, it suggests the future. Perhaps it was this that made Thomas Mann say: "Karl Marx must read Friedrich Hölderlin".' *New Verse* 30, (summer 1938), p.15.

Hölderlin, Mr. Gascoyne has done his generation a service. His monograph is competent. He translates imaginatively [...].'[31] Derek Stanford commented some nine years later that the book 'showed that his [Gascoyne's] talent had come of age: revealing also, extraordinary depth of understanding in one so young'. He refers specifically to the use Gascoyne had made of Jouve's *Poèmes de la folie de Hölderlin*. This meant,' he says,

> that the impact of the German poet was modified by two translations: a feature which would lead us to expect a certain anaemic quality in the work. Nothing, however, is farther from the truth: power of image, clarity of language, and simplicity of music characterize the verse. [...] This small book of forty-eight pages is undoubtedly one of the finest works of poetic 'naturalization' which we have seen in the last twenty years.[32]

'Up till now,' wrote the reviewer in Eliot's *The Criterion*, 'Mr. Gascoyne's own poems have been mainly descriptions of his own sensations; in submitting himself to Hölderlin's vision he has achieved a clearness and a wholeness that he never reached in his first book.'[33]

Although the contents page of ***Hölderlin's Madness*** lists the English titles of twenty poems by the German poet, Gascoyne provided, in effect, versions of twenty-two poems from Jouve's and Klossowski's *Poèmes de la folie de Hölderlin*, because there are two instances where variants with the same title are conflated.[34]

Before looking closely at the four original poems which, according to Scarfe, 'show that he is worthy of the poet he admires' (*FSTCV*, p.76), it would seem appropriate to examine the diction of two or three of Gascoyne's 'adaptations' alongside Jouve's and Hamburger's versions of the same poems:

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[31] No.11, p.76. Further citings as (*FSTCV*).

[32] *The Freedom of Poetry* (London: Falcon Press Ltd., 1947), p.46, 47. Further citings as (*TFP*).

[33] Vol.XVIII, No.70 (October 1938), 'Books of this Quarter', p.406. Further citings as (*CBTQ*).

[34] I am referring to the sixième édition, 1930. Gascoyne chose five poems from the first section, *Poèmes de plusieurs époques*, ten from section two, *Fragments*, and seven (five in practice) from the third section, *Poésies des derniers temps*. 'Summer' incorporates 'L'Eté (variante) p.113 and 'L'Eté (variante) p.115; 'Spring' represents two poems: 'Le Printemps' p.116 and 'Le Printemps', p.120. Since 1938, versions of a further eight poems by Hölderlin have been published, all of which are included in ***Selected Verse Translations*** (Enitharmon, 1996), pp.77-83. Two of these are not found in Jouve's 1930 text.

AND LITTLE KNOWLEDGE BUT MUCH PLEASURE

And little knowledge but much pleasure
Is given to mortal men.

Why dost thou suffice me not O lovely sun
On this May day?
Thou flower of my flowers, what have I more
than thee?

Would that I were as children are!
I should be like the nightingale were I to sing
All my delight in one enraptured song!

(Gascoyne)

Et peu de savoir mais beaucoup de plaisir
Est donné aux mortels.

Pourquoi ô beau soleil ne me suffis-tu pas
Au jour de mai?
Toi fleur de mes fleurs, qu'ai-je plus haut que
Toi?

Si j'étais plutôt comme sont les enfants!
Pareil au rossignol si je chantais
De mon délice un chant confiant!

(Jouve)

UND WENIG WISSEN

Und wenig Wissen, aber der Freude viel
Ist Sterblichen gegeben,

Warum, o schöne Sonne, genügst du mir
Du Blüthe meiner Blühten! Am Maitag nicht?
Was weiß ich höhers denn?

O daß ich lieber wäre, wie Kinder sind!
Daß ich, wie Nachtigallen, ein sorglos Lied
Von meiner Wonne sänge!

(Hölderlin)

AND LITTLE KNOWLEDGE...

And little knowledge only, but joy enough
Is granted to us mortals,

Then why, O lovely sun, do you not suffice,
You blossom of my blossoms, for me, in May?
What do I know that's higher?

Oh that like children rather I could become!
That, like the nightingales, I could sing a song
Quite free of care, all rapture.

(Hamburger)

The obvious starting point is that Gascoyne is operating at two removes and Hamburger at one from their original texts, French and German. In 'And a Little Knowledge but Much Pleasure' Gascoyne opts, for the most part, for a literal reading of Jouve, although in line 5 he translates 'plus haut'/'higher' as 'more': 'what have I more than thee?'. Hamburger's equivalent line reads, 'What do I know that's higher?'. Similarly, in line 6, Jouve's 'plutôt'/'rather' is omitted, but included by Hamburger. The difference between these two English versions lies in the diction employed: Gascoyne consciously chooses archaisms to render certain words and phrases, distancing his version (driven perhaps by Jouve) by using 'thee' and 'thou' in line 5 and 'thou' in line 3: 'Why dost thou suffice me not O lovely sun'.[35] Here 'suffice' is used unusually in a transitive sense, while Hamburger's line reads: 'Then why, O lovely sun, do you not suffice?' It would appear that Gascoyne aimed, appropriately as he saw it, to reproduce the diction of

[35] Kathleen Raine regrets that 'the second person singular has gone from the language with a loss of a certain sacred intimacy it implies, not communicated by "you".' See her essay, 'Germany's Golden Age', a review of Hamburger's *Hölderlin: Poems and Fragments* (Anvil Press, 1994), in *Agenda*, Vol.32, No.2 (summer 1994), p.142. Further citings as (*KJRA*).

the English Romantic poets in his versions of Hölderlin,[36] but in this particular poem he seems, rather, to imitate some of the language favoured by earlier poets such as Francis Quarles (1592-1644) or George Herbert (1593-1633): ''Why dost thou', 'Would that I were', 'were I to sing'. Hamburger, a German specialist, makes a point of writing his sensitive translations in modern English and, in his understanding of Hölderlin's unusual use of Greek metrical form, employs a subtle balance of metre in the four and three stresses in each of the lines of eleven and seven syllables.

In 'Native Land' the nineteen lines of Jouve ('Pays Natal') and Gascoyne reduce to seventeen in Hamburger's 'Home'. Again, Gascoyne opts for 'thee' and 'thy' (lines 4 and 5). He selects 'wild bays' (too literal, perhaps, in line 3) rather than 'wild berries' as Jouve and Hamburger have it. In line 4, Gascoyne's 'expend' is rendered with a different nuance from Jouve's and Hamburger's choice of 'quench'. However, line 10 in 'Native Land' is particularly effective: 'With whisper of the growth in its straight stalks', where Hamburger writes 'There is a whisper of growth, by the straight stalk'. Gascoyne's 'when I interrogate the airs' (line 14) is a literal translation of Jouve's wording ('where I ponder' in Hamburger), as is 'sounding like gold' (line 17); Hamburger has 'with a golden ring'. Gascoyne's 'anew' in line 18 (Hamburger writes 'once more'), is again chosen for effect.

Hamburger's translation of 'Half of Life' comprises two stanzas of seven lines each, where Gascoyne, following Jouve, employs a structure of two stanzas of five and six lines respectively in 'The Half of Life'. The reflection of wild fruit and flowers in the water of the lake seems more lyrically effective in Gascoyne's eloquent version:

Adorned with yellow pears And with wild roses filled, The earth hangs in the lake.	With yellow pears hangs down And full of wild roses The land into the lake.
(Gascoyne)	**(Hamburger)**

The fourth line of 'The Half of Life' omits Hamburger's 'drunk with kisses' and Jouve's 'ivrés de baisers' in favour of 'love-intoxicated'. Gascoyne's 'My woe!', a literal rendering of Jouve's 'Malheur à moi!' is less dramatic in Hamburger's 'But oh,' (the

[36] The *Criterion* reviewer considered that Gascoyne's four original poems accompanying these versions 'often recall the language and imagery of Hölderlin's contemporary Coleridge' (*CBTQ*, p.116).

German has no exclamation mark); and Jouve's 'les roses' leads Gascoyne into 'the rose' (line 7), where Hamburger accurately translates 'die Blumen' as 'the flowers'. In the last line of each version, Gascoyne follows Jouve's 'les drapeaux claquent'/'flags flap' where Hamburger selects 'weathercocks clatter'.

'I differ from David in not choosing archaic diction,' Hamburger wrote to me on 25th April 1998. 'H.'s later diction is as earthy as some of John Clare's.' He had told me the previous year that as a translator he tries 'to get very close to the peculiarities and oddities of the original, to get under the skin of the German'.[37] Another difference here from Gascoyne's approach is that Hamburger aims to tease out the sense of the original which a literal translation cannot do, and is always aware of the particular difficulty translators face: the need to produce a version which somehow retains as much as possible of the original's compression of meaning.

However, the reviewer in the *TLS* observed that 'there is a sad and lucid visionary quality about some of the Hölderlin poems which is impressive',[38] and Edwin Muir, a German scholar, considered that 'the most valuable part of the book is his [Gascoyne's] renderings of Hölderlin's poems, which have the first essential of poetic translation, beside which strict accuracy is of little account. These translations undoubtedly give an idea of the quality of Hölderlin's poetry and convey something of its greatness' (*EMTS*). 'Gascoyne writes his words for utterance,' writes Raine (*KJRA*, p.140). Comparing two versions of the same Hölderlin poem, Gascoyne's 'Song of Destiny' and Hamburger's 'Hyperion's Song of Fate', she praises the latter's excellence, its accuracy, its 'fine rendering of the German metrics,' but claims that it is Gascoyne who 'gives the poem a voice, perhaps the last poet who can make "educated English" sing' (ibid.). In what is a reference to his lyricism, she adds: 'David Gascoyne's words take wing' (p.141). Gascoyne's extraordinary sympathy with Hölderlin the poet and his work which emanates from these 'adaptations' chimes with Yves Bonnefoy's assertion in his essay 'Translating Poetry': 'If a work does not compel us, it is untranslatable'. While acknowledging that the

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37 In a letter dated May 22nd 1997.

38 *Times Literary Supplement* (Saturday, June 11 1938), p.406.

translator 'must make too many sacrifices,' he insists that he also 'has the right to be himself,' involved as he is in 'a creative act'. [39]

In the bibliography of Christopher Middleton's Hölderlin translations, Gascoyne's 'free adaptation'[s] are termed 'imitations' in parenthesis.[40] Although this qualification is not applied to the interpolations, 'Figure in a Landscape', 'Orpheus in the Underworld', 'Tenebrae', 'Epilogue', it is interesting to speculate about Gascoyne's intentions. Did he in these four poems consciously set out to produce 'imitations' of Hölderlin 'intuitively' (apropos his inscription some years later to John Arlott)? At the same time, he was aware of his urgent need to find a new mode of poetic expression as part of his search for an accommodation with his anguished existence, exacerbated by the tension between private and public reality in the later 1930s (suffering so well expressed on her own part by Kathleen Raine recalling that period in the first part of her autobiography, *The Land Unknown*: 'among the wreckage of the outer and inner worlds in which we were astray'). [41] Peter Levi has written:

> As for the experience, for Hölderlin it lay outside the poem, and he preserved it for us; for David Gascoyne, it was surely the experience of someone else's poem powerfully intermingled with his own experiences, and liberated by his innocence of the finer points of German (*TAPL*, p.102).

In his introduction to the ***Collected Poems*** (1965), Robin Skelton argues that 'These four [poems] develop the theme of the poet as seer, and as victim. He is representative of the whole of mankind, however. He sees farther than the majority and suffers more than the majority, but his vision and pain are those of the human race.'[42]

Gascoyne points in his 'Elegiac Improvisation on the Death of Paul Eluard' to 'The youth who rejected all words that could ever be spoken/To conceal and corrupt.' He, himself, may have rejected Surrealism, or what Caesar terms the 'extremes of Surrealism'

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[39] Translated by John Alexander & Clive Wilmer: *The Act and the Place of Poetry*. 'Selected Essays', edited and with an introduction by John Naughton (University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp.142, 137, 139.

[40] *Friedrich Hölderlin & Eduard Mörike*, translated and with an introduction by Christopher Middleton (University of Chicago Press, 1972), p.253.

[41] (Hamish Hamilton, 1975), p.84.

[42] David Gascoyne, op. cit. (Oxford University Press), p.xiii.

(*DLS*, p.186), but something of its liberating spirit remains to inform his poetry so that, in these four poems the legacy of his extended vision and enriched imagery finds expression in the more focused and sensitive handling of pain and suffering in what Stanford calls 'a kind of imaginative commentary upon the life of the German poet' in which 'a new accent is heard' (*TFP*, p.47). These poems are impressive, not least for their lucidity, their precise pictorial quality, the delicacy and sureness of touch with which Gascoyne provides a context, so much more than a mere backcloth, for the powerful drama to be played out and interpreted movingly. There is a tangible intensity of feeling, and as he assumes the persona of Hölderlin there can be no suggestion that Gascoyne is operating here at one remove.

'Figure in a Landscape' opens with the presentation of an idyllic context for the drama to be enacted with overtones of classical Greek tragedy. Here is a landscape - elements of which are often personified - of mountains, hills, dales, pastures, rocks and sea, whose visuality is made palpable under the influence of the all-pervading light provided by 'a newly-risen sun'. In the first three pictorial stanzas of five, four and four lines, the singing valleys and rivers recall those of Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, such as 'The Ecchoing Green' and 'Nurse's Song':

> The verdant valleys full of rivers
> Sang a fresh song to the thirsty hills.
> The rivers sang:
> 'Our mother is the Night, into the Day we flow. The mills
> Which toil our waters have no thirst. We flow like light.'
>
> And the great birds
> Which dwell among the rocks, flew down
> Into the dales to drink, and their dark wings
> Threw flying shades across the pastures green.
>
> At dawn the rivers flowed into the sea.
> The mountain birds
> Rose out of sleep like a winged cloud, a single fleet
> And flew into a newly-risen sun.

The scene is Edenic in its natural beauty, its harmony and tranquillity, and the connection is easily made with Gascoyne's comment in Section 1 of his introductory essay: 'Hölderlin in his madness wrote always of sunlight and dazzling air, and the islands of the Mediterranean noon' (*HM*, p.2). The landscape evoked here is the antithesis of that in Fondane's poetry which Gascoyne characterizes as 'for the most part grey and misty,

sordid and alienated'.[43] How different, then, to turn to the opening of Pierre Jean Jouve's novella of 1932, *Dans les Années profondes* which Gascoyne had read by the time he was engaged in writing ***Hölderlin's Madness***. He told Lucien Jenkins in the *Stand* interview, 'I discovered not only Hölderlin but Jouve. I began to read his poetry and his novels' (p.21). This 'masterly novella'[44] begins with the description of a Mediterranean landscape of valleys and mountains, Italy not Greece. The special quality of the light is unmistakable:

> [...] There are several tiered regions, enclosed in the hundred blue valleys of the hollowed mountains or, by contrast, seated among the pedestal of rock, light and the abstraction far above. Between those higher places, like the sills of heaven, where glacial masses and scaly tips stand at the edge of a landscape gaunt and happy – and the lands of Italy swollen with lakes, trees, majestic painted churches - the traveller climbs and descends and always rediscovers the same mountain pastures and sanctuaries. Up there he is close to the larches, he looks at the silvery rock with its classical line, and at the green waters within the immense expanse: he believes, if to this his spirit is entirely favourable, that he feels the spirit of God immanent in such objects.

The next paragraph begins 'I was going to leave this Paradise that same day'.[45] 'Paradise' recalls Gide's reference which I quoted earlier from the Introduction to ***Hölderlin's Madness***.

However, after the first three stanzas the landscape in Gascoyne's poem and his imagery change abruptly in the following three stanzas of six, five and five lines, where the angry sun's presence is implacable: it is cruel, brutal in the exercise of its 'deadly blood-red rays' which 'strike obliquely' to 'kill the kine'. Although there would seem to be an echo here of the anger of the God of the Old Testament, Gascoyne refers in the last line of stanza four to the gods of classical Greek mythology who 'wander on the mountainside at noon' hidden from view in 'the mists which swim down from the icy heights'. George Steiner has stated that 'The four readings of Hölderlin that Heidegger gave in the guise of lectures and essays between 1936 and 1944 make up one of the most disconcerting, spellbound documents in the history of Western literary and linguistic

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[43] His 'Introduction' in French to the collected poems has been translated by Roger Scott with Catherine McFarlane and is included in ***David Gascoyne: Selected Prose 1934-1996*** (Enitharmon Press, 1998).

[44] Gascoyne's review of Jouve's *Oeuvre*, Tome I, Tome II, in the *Times Literary Supplement* (May 6-12 1988), 'The ascetic sensualist', p.505.

[45] From *Hélène*, Lydia Davis's translation of Jouve's *Dans les Années profondes* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1995), pp.1-2.

sensibility'.[46] For me, the point of contact here between Gascoyne's poem and Heidegger's reading of the German poet is that, as Steiner explains, 'though the gods have left the earth - Hölderlin hymns their going - and though they have abandoned it to its spoilers, they are near still, and light upon it in ardent visitation' (*HGS*, p.142). Tambimuttu, editor of *Poetry* (London) would write discerningly some years later of 'the pagan-spiritual landscapes of David Gascoyne'.[47]

Once again, personification is employed, as in stanza five where the sun is 'anguished', the sea 'Threw up its crested arms and cried aloud out of the depths;' and 'The rocky peaks clawed at the sky like gnarled imploring hands'. This simile leads to another which recalls some of the Freudian images of the Surrealist poems in a line with homoerotic overtones: 'And the black cypresses strained upwards like the sex of a hanged man' (This connects with a later reference towards the end of the poem in the ante-penultimate stanza: 'As the pallid phallus sinks in the clear dawn of a new day').

Present and past are conflated in this timeless world. In his essay 'Hölderlin' in *New Verse* (Summer 1938), Edwin Muir writes that in the German poet's 'shattered world [...] the gods and the elements live there on the same plane as mankind, and there is no hard and fast barrier between time and eternity'.[48]

The landscape is now presented in another violent Surreal metaphor as 'the limbs of a denuded body torn and vanquished from within', and a link is made with Dalí who drew specifically on the Mediterranean landscape round Cadaqués in Catalonia. Gascoyne's perception of the landscape in terms of the physiology of a human body is not so far removed from Dalí's Surrealism and paranoiac-critical method, the double image, in paintings like 'The Spectre of Sex Appeal' (1934), 'The great Paranoiac' (1936) or 'The Endless Enigma' (1938).[49] 'Paranonia' (1935-36) is one of his 'anthropomorphic

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[46] *Heidegger*, 2nd edition revised and expanded, (Fontana Press, 1992, first published 1978), p.141. Further citings as (*HGS*).

[47] 'Letter' in *Poetry* (London), Vol.3, No.11 (Sept.-Oct. 1947), p.7.

[48] No.30, p.15.

[49] Dawn Ades explains lucidly how Dalí's method defined by him as a form of 'irrational knowledge' based on a 'delirium of interpretation', rests on 'the ability of the artist to perceive different images within a given configuration'. The activity is associated with 'a form of madness or mental distance which he deliberately sets out to simulate'. See *Dalí* (Thames & Hudson, 1982 & 1991), p.119

landscapes' of the late 30s. Gascoyne's 'imagination and language reach out to the agony of Hölderlin's slide into schizophrenia, particularly in 'Figure in a Landscape' where,' writes Heather Buck, 'in stanza after stanza there is no separation between the Surrealist images of nature and the chaos in his mind.' She reads this poem as 'a portrayal of the walk from Bordeaux to Nürtingen and the collapse into madness'.[50]

The 'chaste white road' which in the unexpected simile 'like a plaint' leads on endlessly in space and time, serves to introduce a traveller[51] in stanza seven in a series of incantatory antinomies:

> Between the opposition of the night and day
> Between the opposition of the earth and sky
> Between the opposition of the sea and land
> Between the opposition of the landscape and the road
> A traveller came
> Whose only nudity his armour was
> Against the whirlwind and the weapon, the undoing wound,
>
> And met himself half-way.

There are echoes here of T.S. Eliot's semantic and lexical patterning in *The Hollow Men* (1925)[52] and the repetition of verbal structures in *Ash Wednesday* (1930). The traveller represents a fusion of Past and Present: he is at one and the same time 'spectre' and 'flesh' in a timeless landscape or nether world. Michael Schmidt recognizes the 'dramatic power' of 'Figure in a Landscape': he points out how Gascoyne, by 'delaying the use of the possessive "his" in the third, fourth and fifth lines quoted, makes its appearance in the last line telling. Pain and revelation define the possessor'.[53] This mythopoeic figure is a sacrificial victim to the gods:

> Infinitely small among the infinitely huge,
> Drunk with the rising fluids of his breast, his boiling heart,
> Exposed and naked as the skeleton - upon the knees
> Like some tormented desert saint - he flung
> The last curse of regret against Omnipotence.
> And the lightning struck his face.

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[50] In her review of ***Collected Poems 1988*** (Oxford University Press) in *Agenda*, Vol.26, no.4 (winter 1988), pp.63. Further citings as (*HBA*).

[51] There is a traveller in the landscape of the Jouve extract. Margaret Callender comments that Jouve 'feels this impregnation of a locality with a human presence profoundly': *The Poetry of Pierre Jean Jouve* (Manchester University Press, 1965), p.172. Further citings as (*MCPJJ*).

[52] As in the lines here (and those which immediately precede and follow them): 'Between the conception/And the creation/Between the emotion/And the response/Falls the shadow.

[53] 'David Gascoyne' in *50 Modern Poets* (Pan Books, 1979), p.289.

In his commentary on Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin, Steiner writes of the gods who are still near and 'light upon [the earth] in ardent visitation. *Of these, it is the poet who is the immediate object. It is he whom lightning strikes* [my emphases]' (*HGS*, p.142). The man in the landscape is an archetypal protagonist from ancient Greek tragedy; he is also Hölderlin, and Gascoyne's alter ego: the poet-traveller on the map of pre-war Europe in the last years of the thirties tormented by issues of faith and the spiritual element missing from Surrealism, and consciously trying to forge his own new identity as a writer.[54]

The lightning strike at the end of stanza nine has a cathartic effect on the 'agonizing' landscape [of stanza six] or wilderness, as tranquillity and fecundity are restored in stanzas ten to twelve:

> [...] the bruised earth blooms again,
> The storm-wrack, wrack of the cloudy sea
> Dissolve, the rocks relax,
> [...]
> The valley rivers irrigate the land, the mills
> Revolve, the hills are fecund with the cypress and the vine,
> And the great eagles guard the mountain heights.

'Clear milk of love, O lave the devastated vale,' cries the speaker. The suffering poet-traveller, whose 'wild eyes melt and close'

> Whose hands still grope and clutch, whose head
> Thrown back entreats the guerison
> And music

of the beneficent high-noon light, opposed to the harsh 'eye of the sun' that is 'no more blind', is at the mercy of 'The Presences, the Unseen in the sky,/ Inscrutable'. Reviewing Gascoyne's ***Selected Verse Translations*** in 1996, Neville Braybrooke speaks of the 'perfect fusion' between 'the poet of this century [Gascoyne] and the nineteenth-century German poet.' Both, he says

> acknowledge the reality of 'winds of heaven' and pay homage to the 'Unseen Presences' who surround mankind. One is back in the classical world of Greek drama, in which messengers bring tidings of woe as well as of hope [...]. I realize how the ancient world can be understood fully only in the light of Calvary, and the immediate days which followed. For in the classical world men are seen at the mercy of

[54] There is irony in the fact that while Hölderlin was 'strongly committed to a new life which most people called madness that he invariably signed these [last] poems with the name Scardinelli' in which 'Jouve probably saw a supreme example of the renunciation of identity [...]': Callender, op. cit., p.101.

> the gods, whereas in the Christian world they are seen hanging on the mercy of God.[55]

The 'influences' of the gods

> like rays
> Descend upon him, pass through and again
> Like golden bees the hive of his lost head.

There is a resonance in the last two words which not only play upon the idea of Hölderlin whose head is 'lost' because of his madness or schizophrenia, but which immediately bring to mind both the separated head of Shelley's 'Ozymandias' and those of Dalí's paintings 'Sleep' (1934) and 'The Great Paranoiac' to which I referred earlier.

There is a greater lucidity in the visionary 'Figure in a Landscape', an acknowledgement of the need for meaning, together with a strong sense of graphic narrative, and a conscious (if not wholly successful) effort to steer clear of the bizarre image and illogical juxtaposition in what is an apocalyptic scenario. The 'emotion', the 'raised voice' and the 'clear coherent speech' he hoped to find (*CJS*, 24.1X.37, quoted on the second page of this chapter) are clearly present, as he addresses the 'inner problem of modern man [...] as a psychological being and as a spiritual being' (quoted earlier).

The second interpolated poem, 'Orpheus in the Underworld', comprises four irregular unrhymed stanzas of five, six, nine and four lines. The Past tense of the first three stanzas gives way to the immediacy of the Present in the final one.

The landscape elements are again clearly defined: rock, stone, sky, sea, sun, deserts, pastures, plains: here is the stage on which the drama will be played out. But it is a Greece ('the distracting foreign land' of line 20) in which rigidity and coldness are present: the 'curtains of rock' (line 1) become 'cold curtains of rock' (last line); 'rigid hands' draw back 'the draperies' (lines 4 and 5) which are 'the rigid draperies' of the penultimate line. The imagery of the first three lines of the opening stanza owes something to Surrealism:

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[55] *The Tablet* (21 September 1996), p.1229. Further citings as (*TT*).

Curtains of rock
And tears of stone
Wet leaves in a high crevice of the sky...

The oxymoronic 'curtains of rock', and 'the tears of stone' do not belong to a view of the world we readily recognize or share. Gascoyne appears to be 'strangeifying' reality. However, the central figure bears a lyre, and this is consistent with our knowledge of the mythical Orpheus who continued to sing and play his instrument for seven months after the final separation from Eurydice.[56] He wears 'the blue robes of a king', and there is a link with the third stanza of Rilke's 'Orpheus, Eurydice, Hermes' where Orpheus is described as 'the slender man in the blue mantle'.[57] But there is something out of kilter here, underscored by the strangeness of the first stanza to which I have referred: the lyre is described as 'shattered' (line 6) and 'broken' (line 21), and the only music is provided imperfectly by 'the distant sea'

faintly heard
From time to time, in the suddenly rising wind,
Like broken song.

The sleeper wakes occasionally and

From between half-open lips,
Escaped the bewildered words which try to tell
The tale of his bright night
And his wing-shadowed day.

There is no suggestion of the enlightenment Orpheus attains after he has emerged from Hades leaving Eurydice behind. This figure in a landscape is not Orpheus but a vision of Hölderlin: Gascoyne told Gwendolyn Murphy that 'Orpheus in the Underworld' was 'from a new series of religious - or "metaphysical" - poems on the theme of Death'. This poem, he said, 'is not meant to be a transcription of the Orpheus legend [...]' but 'refers to the poet Hölderlin exiled to the underworld of insanity' (*TMP*, p.202).

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[56] Bertrand Matthieu considers that Orpheus's enlightenment is equivalent to a 'paradisal condition', the 'state of "palingénesis" ("rebirth")' in his article 'Henry Miller's Divine Comedy' in *Temenos* 7, 1986, p.126.

[57] The poem, translated by Stephen Spender, appeared in *New Verse* 5 (October 1933), p.2; the same issue included Gascoyne's 'And the Seventh Dream.

Notwithstanding this assertion, there remain points of contact: Gascoyne presents his Hölderlin isolated in madness and suffering, in a nether world of half-perceived sounds dreaming of ancient Greece. The landscape is peopled with figures from classical Greek tragedy like Orpheus with whom he is inextricably linked in his own scarred mind, and like Oedipus, suggested in the lines

> And wearing the blue robes of a king,
> And looking through eyes like holes torn in a screen;

As Orpheus breaks the conditions imposed by Pluto, Eurydice cries, 'O Orpheus what is this madness which has betrayed us both?'[58] Unlike the Muse's son, the protagonist may not be able to produce marvellous [verbal] music, but he, too, is parted irrevocably from his beloved: both Susette and Eurydice are dead. He, like Rilke's Orpheus is 'Unprotected, exposed, here on the mountains of the heart'.[59]

The binary oppositions, life and death,[60] reality and dream, day and night, matter and spirit, are dissolved or dissolving in this timeless world where the complex Hölderlin figure has, at best, a tenuous hold on a reality which encompasses 'Wet leaves in a *high crevice of the sky*' and 'Cold curtains of rock concealing *the bottomless sky*' [my emphases]: reality has undergone a transformation, and the skewed perception is provoked by his madness. 'In *Brot und Wein*,' Corbet Stewart explains, 'Hölderlin effects a remarkable poetic synthesis between Greek religion and Christianity. Day and night,' he continues, 'symbolize respectively the presence on earth and the withdrawal from it of the divine element' (op. cit. p.297). Gascoyne also told Murphy that 'Orpheus in the Underworld' is 'an allegory of the spiritual condition of the twentieth-century poet [...]'. The protagonist whom we perceive as a conflation of Orpheus- Hölderlin is at one and the same time Gascoyne himself who represents the situation of 'the poet in the world of today' (*TMP*, p.202), adrift in a Europe which has itself gone mad, in a world like Hölderlin's from which the divine element seems absent. Heidegger quoted a line from a late poem by Hölderlin in a lecture in 1952: 'Mankind dwells poetically, in the condition

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[58] Rex Warner, *The Stories of the Greeks* (Granada Publishing, 1979), p.92.

[59] *Die Sonette an Orpheus.* (1922), II.15, 'Ausgesetzt auf den Bergen des Herzens', in *The Penguin Book of German Verse*, (ed.) Leonard Foster (Penguin Books, 1957), pp.407-8.

[60] Rilke explained that the meaning of his *Sonnets to Orpheus* expresses 'the oneness of life and death'. Quoted in James McFarlane, 'The Mind of Modernism' in *Modernism: A Guide toEuropean Literature 1890-1930* (Penguin Books, 1976, 1991), p.382.

of poetry'. Steiner comments: 'He [Heidegger] sees in it the ultimate, probably the only, hope for a way out from the nihilism of the age'.[61]

'Tenebrae', the third interpolation in ***Hölderlin's Madness***, comprises four stanzas of three, five, eight and three lines. Though 'tenebrae' formerly signified in the Catholic Church the matins and lauds for Thursday, Friday and Saturday of Holy Week, usually sung in the evenings or at night, I take Gascoyne's title to represent darkness, gloom, shadow, from the Latin word *tenebrae*. He was to use the title again in the later ***Poems 1937-42*** for the first of the eight poems which together form the *Miserere* sequence.

This original poem in ***Hölderlin's Madness*** is predicated on the interaction of Day and Night, Light and Darkness, and would seem to articulate the same concerns as those of 'Orpheus in the Underworld': the anguished search for light in the ever-encroaching blackness of the modern world.

The poem focuses in stanza one on the solitary figure:

> Brown darkness on the gazing face
> In the cavern of candlelight reflects
> The passing of the immaterial world in the deep eyes.

There is emphasis on both the visual and the auditory here: the sound of 'the granite organ in the crypt' resonates so potently that it 'thunders through the blood'. Gascoyne's obsession with the Surrealist image of dissolved antinomies, 'the sun at midnight', surfaces in 'the unearthly song that floods/The brain with bursting suns': it is 'daylight song' but one that is heard 'In endless night' (line 9). But in the darkness there is light in the stars, 'in the spirit like the snow of dawn', in the meteors which chime with 'the brilliance of summer' in the swans on the rivers of the valley, 'White, white in the light of dream'.[62] Night and Day seem indistinguishable.

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[61] '*Dichterisch wohnet der Mensch*', in Steiner (*HGS*), p.145.

[62] In Gascoyne's own version of Hölderlin's 'Half of Life', we find these two lines: 'And wondrous love-intoxicated swans/In peaceful holy waters dip their heads'.

The closing lines would appear to suggest that rather than Hölderlin, the lonely figure here represents Gascoyne, the visionary poet driven by his spiritual quest, and finding reason to hope in the serenity of

> Clear light!
> He has no need of candles who can see
> A longer, more celestial day than ours.

Heather Buck, however, assumes that Gascoyne is addressing Hölderlin in the last two lines quoted (*HBA*, p.63).

Francis Scarfe thought that 'Tenebrae' 'shows a capacity for delicate and sensitive writing'.[63] It would be difficult to disagree with him or with Philip Gardner who comments that 'Jouve's mystical religious intensity greatly influenced him [Gascoyne]' (DLB, p.144) at this time. The evidence is unmistakable in this luminous poem, charged with tension and feeling, and concern for the human condition.

'Epilogue', printed at the end of the Hölderlin versions is written, not unexpectedly, in four unrhymed stanzas of irregular length: five, six, eight and seven lines respectively. The supremely suffering central figure is again Orpheus-Hölderlin, imprisoned in his own madness, 'who walked the lap of lands, and sang' (line 5), 'the man of matted hair/And music' (lines 12-13), but also Gascoyne, struggling against the constrictions imposed by the social condition of bourgeois culture, against the surging international political 'madness' of the late thirties, the poet tormented internally by his own personal demons.

There is ambiguity in the presentation of the Orpheus-Hölderlin figure: references to his 'amazed eyes' (line 3), and 'The black sun in his blood' (line 16) suggest that he is living. However, other lines would seem to indicate that he is dead: 'The severed artery/The sand-obliterated face' (lines 1-2) are transposed into 'the sandy artery' and 'The severed head' (lines 21-22). Stanza three refers to 'The gestures of his skeleton, simplicity/Of white bones worn away' (lines 17-18), while his 'Limbs strewn across the

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[63] *Auden and After: The Liberation of Poetry 1930-1941* (London: Routledge, 1942), pp.150-1. Further citings as (*FSAA*).

rocks' are 'Like broken boats' (lines 23-24), pointing back to the lines 'the limbs/Of a vast denuded body torn and vanquished from within' and 'Exposed and naked as a skeleton' from stanzas six and nine in 'Figure in a Landscape'. In order to understand this apparent ambiguity, it might be helpful to note that in the Surrealists' view, there is 'a certain spiritual plane on which life and death, the real and the imaginary, the past and the future, the communicable and the incommunicable, the high and the low, are not conceived of as opposites',[64] and this notion seems to have some currency in this and the other three original interpolated poems. Kathleen Raine characterizes this mental condition where the oppositions are collapsed as 'the living and creative imagination itself' (*DGDAF*, pp.56-7). However, there is another possible reading of the central figure of these interpolations, so intimately and so palpably fused with the landscape. The protagonist, as I have already suggested, is Hölderlin/Gascoyne, yet also, at the same time in 'Epilogue' and 'Figure in a Landscape' unconsciously transmuted by the poet into Jouve's Hélène whose radiant presence 'unifies' (Callender) the collection *Matière Céleste* (1937),[65] the first poems of which were published shortly after the novella *Dans les Années profondes*. Callender describes how, after her death, the 'poetic fiction' Hélène 'fills the landscape - or rather the world is seen through her. The whole universe - rocks, trees, people, stars - are contained in this majestic but always human presence' (*MCPJJ*, p.161).[66]

There may be apocalyptic overtones in the Surrealistic lines: 'Explosions of every dimension/Directions run away/Towards the sun/The bitter sunset'; the disconnectedness or obscurity of some of the lines relates both to Hölderlin's mode of expression in the late poems, and to Gascoyne's own search for a new voice with which to articulate his own anguish. But Jouve's influence is clear: Callender refers to 'Hallucinatory experiences, presented quite often in matter-of-fact terms' in his novels, and to 'the frequent presence

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[64] Breton, *Second Manifesto*, quoted and translated by Gascoyne in ***A Short Survey of Surrealism***, p.86.

[65] (Paris: Gallimard).

[66] I offer this suggestion in the light of Gascoyne's familiarity at that time with Jouve's Hélène poems, the agonizing about his sexual identity articulated in his journal, and C.W. Bigsby's reading of *A Streetcar Named Desire* where he argues that 'In a sense Blanche Dubois is Tennessee Williams. He turned to the theatre as a refuge from a reality he found unbearable, harassed by a society that seemed to him to have no space for the poet'. 'Book of the Century' in *The Daily Telegraph* Arts & Books (Saturday, August 8 1998), p.A3.

in the texts of "doubles" to the main characters [...] and projected images that can be human, divine [...]'.[67]

The thrust of the poem thus far might appear to evince a powerful visual impression of the Orpheus-Hölderlin-Gascoyne solitary, broken on the wheel of the modern age. However, the opening lines of the final stanza, 'Dissolve and meet themselves again/All things;' echo directly lines 10/11 of stanza two: 'where all things rise and fall,/Revolve, and meet themselves again', and they confer specific meaning to the final lines of the poem: 'So shall their widespread body rise/And march, and marching sing'. The use of 'distributed' (line 4) in relation to the protagonist's organs provides a parallel with the figure of Osiris ('And the Seventh Dream...'), whose scattered body parts were collected and re-assembled by his sister Isis.[68] Here, Gascoyne seems to engage with the concept of palingenesis, or regeneration.[69] It may be that through his Hölderlin persona in this metaphysical poem, he is asserting that the lyric poet in his 'imaginative wholeness' (Raine, *DGDAS*, p.55) does have a significant role to play in the benighted modern age, and that in this sense 'Epilogue', while expressing the *zeitgeist*, closes on a qualified optimistic (not a solipsistic) note.

The *Criterion* reviewer finds that the landscapes in these four poems 'do not come from the world of natural scenery, but from the world of dreams. They are haunted by Presences, personed Elements, principles of the Earth; the verdant valleys, the thirsty hills and great birds are charged with meaning. The poems turn on the impossibility of reconciling the world known through the senses with the world of imagination' (*CBTQ*), p.116). Yet it could be argued that Gascoyne's presentation of landscape in these four poems reflects something other than the world of dreams. This is a psychological terrain where the immediate point of reference might be Auden's extensive use of symbolic landscape in his thirties poems, especially the 'paysage moralisé' (also the title of an early

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[67] Review of Sylvie Poza, *Lecture critique des romans de Pierre Jean Jouve*, in *French Studies*, Vol.50, No.4 (1996), p.47.

[68] The section 'Metaphysical Poems' in ***Poems 1937-42*** is prefaced by a line from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*.

[69] The *Collins English Dictionary* (Third edition 1992) offers this definition: 'spiritual rebirth through metempsychosis of Christian baptism', p.1123. 'Metempsychosis' is expressed as 'the entering of a soul after death upon a new cycle of existence in a new body either of human or animal.

poem),[70] where the topography represents at the same time a spiritual condition. In his monograph on Auden, Richard Hoggart suggests that the poet's landscapes 'are symbols of human dilemmas' and 'a means of visually symbolizing the spiritual conflicts in man'.[71] In this respect, Rilke clearly influenced Auden who wrote in a review of the Austrian poet: 'He thinks of the human in terms of the non-human [...] one of [his] most characteristic devices is the expression of human life in terms of landscape'.[72] Any understanding of what Gascoyne was attempting in terms of landscape in these four poems lies perhaps in a draft I found in one of the notebooks where he had begun an introductory piece to accompany a selection of poems by George Herbert: 'In certain aspects of Romanticism we find *an anthropomorphic humanizing of landscape*' (my emphasis).[73]

It is as if Gascoyne perceives Hölderlin's madness in these four poems as an allegory of his own spiritual condition in the last years of the 1930s, confronted by the inescapable Void, desperately reaching out for something to believe in, some kind of faith to make sense of a world spinning out of control. He concluded his interview with Lucien Jenkins 'by citing Hölderlin: "The poet's job is to go on holding on to something like faith, through the darkness of total lack of faith, what Buber calls the eclipse of God"' (Op.cit., p.25). At the end of the first section of his 'impassioned' (*KJRA*, p.120) introductory essay to ***Hölderlin's Madness***, Gascoyne writes emphatically: 'his poetry is stronger than despair and reaches into the future and the light' (p.3); however, Rémy points to the underlying problem: 'le mystère de l'éloignement des dieux pour Hölderlin, de l'absence de Dieu pour Gascoyne et Jouve' ('the mystery for Hölderlin of the Gods' distance, and for Gascoyne and Jouve the mystery of God's absence', *DGUI*, p.26).

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[70] 'Hearing of harvest rotting in the valleys', first published in *The Criterion*, Vol.XII, No.XLIX (July 1933), pp.606-7.

[71] *W.H. Auden*, Writers & their Work no.93 (Longmans, Green & Co.,1957), pp.18, 33. Further references will be cited as (*RHWHA*).

[72] This quotation, on p.33 of Hoggart's text, is unsourced, but is drawn from one of two reviews by Auden of Rilke translations in the *New Republic*, C, 1292 (6 September 1939), pp.135-6.

[73] Add.56058. Hoggart suggests, too, that Auden considers the desert and the sea 'as complex images of man's spiritual wanderings' in his study *The Enchafèd Flood*' (p.10). It could be added that in Auden's *The Sea and the Mirror*, the speaker in 'Caliban Addressing the Audience' refers to 'elements in an allegorical landscape': *For the Time Being* (Faber& Faber, 1945), p.53.

In the collection ***Poems 1937-42***, published five years after ***Hölderlin's Madness***, the tortured, isolated protagonist of these interpolated poems assumes a new and specific significance closely linked with Christian beliefs

* * *

4 'THE TIME OF THE OPEN TOMB'

Poems 1937-42

'Art forces us to gaze into the horror of existence yet without being turned to stone by the vision.'

Friedrich Nietzsche: *The Birth of Tragedy.*

Prior to the publication of ***Hölderlin's Madness*** in May 1938, seven new poems had appeared in print, six of which would be included five years later in Gascoyne's third collection, ***Poems 1937-42***: 'World Without End' (as 'See now across the seas of azure milk'), 'I.M. Benjamin Fondane' (as 'This is the osseous and uncertain desert'), and 'Eve' (as 'Eve - Profound radiance issuing') in *Purpose*;[1] 'Cavatina', 'Venus Androgyne', 'The Fault' (all three rewritten before publication in ***Poems 1937-42***) and 'The Hero' and 'Signs' (not included in that collection) in *Delta*.[2] Gascoyne had also written 'Fortress', 'Insurrection' (both on 9-10 August of that same year, *CJS*, p.171) and 'Snow in Europe' ('Christmas 1938'). 'Kyrie' first came out in *Partisan Review* (fall 1938),[3] shortly before Jouve sent Gascoyne the NRF edition of his new collection, *Kyrie*, in January of 1939. The first Jouve translations, placed in Section II of ***Poems 1937-42***, began to appear in periodicals from Easter 1939.[4]

In September 1939, Gascoyne announced in his journal that he had completed 'one or two "crisis poems"': he was referring to '"Three Stars" and "Prophetic Mouth"; also yesterday wrote "Artist"' (*CJS*, p.272).[5] Worksheets of these first two poems are in Notebook (Add.56044) in the British Library, together with a draft of 'Mozart' (later 'Mozart: Sursum Corda') first published in *Seven*.[6] (See Appendix **2A**).

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1 Vol.10, No.1 (January-March, 1938). Underlined titles indicate the title published in ***Poems 1937-42***.
2 No.2 (April 1938).
3 Vol.6, No.1.
4 'Nada' in *Delta*, No.1, in *Poetry* (London), Vol.1, No.5, March-April 1941 (entitled 'Nada' for the first time) together with 'The Moths'; 'Woman and Earth' in *Kingdom Come*, Vol.3, No.9, November-December 1941, and in *New Directions*, Vol.7, 1942, along with 'Nada', 'Brow', 'Insula Monti Majoris' and 'The Two Witnesses'.
5 In ***Poems 1937-42***, the first is entitled 'The Three Stars: A Prophecy', the second 'Epode' and the third 'Philosophical Artisan' (in the third impression 1948).
6 No.4 (summer 1939).

A note by Gascoyne to the first edition (and subsequent second and third impressions, 1944 and 1948) of ***Poems 1937-42***, explains that:

> The poems in this collection were originally planned as two separate ensembles: 'The Open Tomb' (1937-39) and 'The Conquest of Defeat' (1939-42); but it has now seemed expedient to combine the two under the present title, and to rearrange the whole order of the poems so as to present them here in five main groups, roughly classifiable as follows: (1) Religious poems; (2) metaphysical (or "metapsychological") poems; (3) a longer poem; (4) poems on themes of a "personal" nature; (5) poems of time and place.

The period of gestation that led to the publication of ***Poems 1937-42***, that is, its literary genesis, is of considerable interest. In another notebook dating from the late 1930s (Add.56041) Gascoyne drew up a plan for his proposed new collection *The Open Tomb*, comprising some twenty-seven poems (see **Appendix 2B**). All but four titles: 'The Beast', 'Final Score', 'The Entombment' and 'Misericord' would be included in ***Poems 1937-42***; it is doubtful whether these were ever begun or drafted, though it is also possible that 'The Entombment' and 'Misericord' ('Lachrymae'?) exist as poems with different titles. Of the other twenty-three poems, sixteen had already been published in periodicals by 1939, followed by 'Legendary Fragment' in 1940 in *Kingdom Come*, while six had been written but did not appear in print for the first time until 1943. 'Concert of Angels' (for Kay Boyle) came out in *Adam* three years later, as did 'Elsewhere'.[7] Gascoyne's journal entry for 12th September 1939 reports that his poem 'The Open Tomb' has just been published in *The Nineteenth Century and After*, and records his intention to send 'Three Stars', 'Prophetic Mouth', 'Artist' and 'Elsewhere' (previously written) to T.S. Eliot and to try to make him 'come to a final decision about the collection he is supposed to be considering for Fabers' (*CJS*, p.272). As far as Gascoyne can remember [I asked him in October 1998] this collection had no title, but it is not unreasonable to suggest that it may have been given one from the following: *Despair Has Wings*, *The Open Tomb*, *World Without End*, *The Conquest of Defeat*. Eliot rejected the poems: 'He said,' Gascoyne told me with a smile, 'that they "lacked sufficient objective correlativity"'.

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[7] *Kingdom Come*, Vol.1, No.2 (winter 1940-41); *Adam*, 159/160 (June-July 1946); *Adam*, 156/7 (March-April 1946).

However, it appears from two letters he wrote, one to Anthony Dickins on 31.III.39, and the other to Tambimuttu on 8.V.39. at *Poetry* (London) that Eliot had intended to publish some of the Jouve translations in *The Criterion*; now, or so it would seem, they were about to appear instead in Tambimuttu's magazine, as Gascoyne was acknowledging receipt of some proofs in his reply to Dickins. Eliot had sent on the manuscript to the *Poetry* (London) office, together with some of Gascoyne's own poems which Dickins mistakenly (but understandably, as I argue later) supposed were also translations from Jouve.[8]

Eliot also decided against publishing Kathleen Raine's first collection of poems, returning the manuscript to her. Some years later, she recalls in her autobiographical *The Land Unknown*, Eliot admitted that he had had afterthoughts about both younger poets: '*Another* mistake I made was over David Gascoyne,' he told her. She adds: 'Failing to find immediate acceptance in the literary world, or to receive the benediction of the greatest man of letters, I found a true friend of my poetry in Tambimuttu, editor of *Poetry* (London)'.[9] As did David Gascoyne, but he entertained other plans and projects before 1943.

On another page in that same notebook he outlined a collection *World Without End (The Open Tomb)* (see **Appendix 2C**) comprising twenty poems, eighteen of which appear in the previous plan, *The Open Tomb*. It is interesting that neither 'The Last Hour' ('Tenebrae')[10] nor 'Pieta' are included, and even more puzzling that 'The Open Tomb' itself is omitted, while 'Winter Garden' and 'The Wall' are not considered. Gascoyne has

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8 'The poems "De Profundis" and "Lachrymae" are not translations. The ms [.] sent you ought to contain the French text of four poems by Pierre Jean Jouve together with my translations of them, nos.2 and 3 being entitled "In Insula Monti Majoris" [sic] and "Interior Landscape", the others without titles; the poems of mine must have been enclosed by mistake. Eliot's intention was to publish the French originals with their translation opposite, but I do not suppose you will have enough space at your disposal to be able to do this'. [From a photocopy of the original letter made for me by Alan Clodd]. In fact, 'De Profundis' and 'Lachrymae' were first published in *Poetry* (London) in Vol.1, No.2 in April of that year, along with 'The Last Hour' and 'Ex Nihilo', while the first of his Jouve translations to appear in the magazine came two years later in No.5, March-April 1941, perhaps because in his letter to Tambi two months later Gascoyne apologizes for not having been able to send copies of the Jouve translations yet. 'Couldn't you ask the "Criterion" to see if they can't find the original copy?' [Both letters were sent from 21, Grove Terrace, Teddington, London]. 'Insula Monti Majoris' was first printed in *New Directions*, Vol.7, 1942, with four other translations from Jouve (See footnote 4 above).

9 *The Land Unknown: Further Chapters of Autobiography* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975), p.156.

10 'The Last Hour' in *Poetry* (London), Vol.1, No.2 (April 1939), then 'Tenebrae' in ***Poems 1937-42.***

listed a poem, 'Gloria Mundi', which may never have been written, and decided against the inclusion of his Jouve translation 'Woman and Earth'. On the same line, numbered 16, there appear to be two separate poems: 'Death and Eros' does not exist, as far as I know, but may simply represent an alternative title for 'Fortress', while the scored out title 'After long thirst for sky...' on the next line becomes 'Fête in February' in his next projected collection *The Conquest of Defeat - Poems 1939-40*, [not '*1939-1942*'] (see **Appendix 2D**) which I found in the same Notebook (ADD. 62947) facing page 50. A third projection, in that notebook, *World Without End*, (**Appendix 2D**) on page 52 lists some fifteen titles in common; this time the Jouve version, 'Woman and Earth', is included, as is 'Signs'. It must be assumed that 'The Poet Sings' and 'Avenging Angel' were never written, which may also apply to 'Gloria Mundi', though it can be seen that there were to be six poems under that title: 'Mountains', 'Oceans', 'Continents', 'Man', 'The Hidden Powers', 'Gloria Mundi'. There was no place on this page for 'Ex Nihilo', 'Insurrection', 'Legendary Fragment' or the title poem 'World Without End' ('See how across the seas'), or 'Pieta' which itself forms the title of yet another proposed collection, *Pieta* (*or World Without End*'), which is planned in four sections: 1 'Elegiac Stanzas (in memory of Alban Berg)'; 2 *Hölderlin's Madness*; 3 'Cortège of Death'; 4 'Hymn' (**Appendix 2D**). I suspect that 'Hymn' refers to what Gascoyne calls 'Requiem Hymn (for solo voice and choir)' on page 52, that was to become 'Requiem', dedicated to Priaulx Rainier and given to her in 1940[11] as a text to be set to music, but not composed by her until several years later. (The poem was published in 1956 in the programme accompanying the first performance at the Victoria and Albert Museum on Sunday, April 15th of that year. Gascoyne was present and has told me that he went up on stage with Rainier at the end to receive the audience's applause). 'Cortège of Death' appears as 'Cortège and Hymn of Death' on page 52 where a note identifies 'The Hero', 'The Nameless Souls' and 'Dead Poet' and 'Post-Mortem' as poems originally from that projected sequence. 'Post-Mortem' is in draft form in a Notebook from the thirties, and when I showed him a copy I had made he exclaimed how clearly it showed the influence of Jouve, but grimaced at the same time and added, 'But I don't like the poem', almost

[11] Gascoyne showed the first draft of what would become 'Requiem' to Rainier in November of 1937. However, he has dated it 1938-1940 rather than 1937-1940 in the *Collected Poems 1988*. Rainier did not feel able to compose the music to accompany Gascoyne's libretto until 1945. See 'Priaulx Rainier writes about the setting of David Gascoyne's "Requiem" in *The Listener*, August 17th, 1972, p.185.

with a shudder. Neither 'The Nameless Souls' nor 'Dead Poet' was written, as far as I can ascertain, and again it would appear that 'Cortège [and Hymn] of Death' remains, tantalizingly, another unfulfilled project.

The difficulties associated with the variant titles for a new collection towards the end of the decade, *The Open Tomb*, *World Without End* (*The Open Tomb*), *World Without End*, and *Pieta* (*World Without End*) cannot now be resolved by Gascoyne who was intrigued to see the Appendices but unable to shed any light on what was written or not written, or to elucidate further. Another complication is the reference in three different entries in the ***Collected Journals*** in 1938 to yet another proposed collection of poems: *Despair Has Wings*.[12] The title is a literal translation from a line by Jouve, '*Le désespoir a des ailes*', and Gascoyne uses the whole four line verse as the epigraph to the *Miserere* sequence in ***Poems 1937-42***. He agrees (October 11th 1998) that *Despair Has Wings* may well have been the initial title for the later *The Open Tomb*, but now the line has meaning for him only as that transcription from the French poet.

The Conquest of Defeat is a detailed plan for fifty poems in three sections: I 'Dedicatory and Commemorative Poems' (15) , II 'Personal and Confessional Poems' (20) and III 'Poems on Contemporary and General Themes' (15). Of the poems listed in Section I, ten were clearly planned but never written as far as I can ascertain. Of the poems to be dedicated fascinatingly to Rimbaud, Chestov, Jouve, Antonia White, Spender and George Barker, only the latter was drafted but remained unpublished [Gascoyne cannot now understand how this came about] until John Lehmann brought out ***A Vagrant and other poems***, where it appears as 'The Sacred Hearth'. For the first time, Gascoyne announces his intention to include, in Section II, a sequence of seven poems about his life in France in the 1930s, 'Paris Remembered' (later, 'Seven Paris Poems [Suite]', and 'Reminiscences of Paris' in Notebooks ADD.56045 and 56046). Four were published in ***Poems 1937-42***, 'Chambre d'Hôtel', 'Fête in February' (retitled 'Fête'), 'Jardin du Palais Royal', 'Les Noctambules' (retitled 'Noctambules'). Of the remaining sixteen, only five

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[12] (p.156) 30.V.38: [between August 1937 and March 1938] 'I wrote ***Hölderlin's Madness***, and *Despair Has Wings*.' (p.171) 10.VIII.38: '[...] - must revise *Despair Has Wings*, and make another effort to find a publisher for it.' (p.198) 29.X.38: 'I have, however, written a fragment of a long religious poem, which ought to form the final part of *Despair Has Wings* ("It is dark here and silent this dark place").'

were included in the 1943 collection. The final section offers twelve titles out of the proposed fifteen, and of these seven appeared in Section V of ***Poems 1937-42***. 'Wozzeck, Act III, Scenes 4-5', a response to Alban Berg's opera, exists in partial draft form (though crossed out) in one of the notebooks. Unaccountably, the title poem of the projected book, *The Conquest of Defeat*, was never written, or has not survived, as is the case with what would have been Gascoyne's only poetic response to his Spanish Civil War experience, 'Barcelona 1936-39'. It was a note by Jean Cocteau in his *Opium Journals* which seemed to formulate so closely the very attitude and vital ideas that Gascoyne was attempting to represent and develop in the poems that were to comprise *The Conquest of Defeat*: 'The only durable aesthetic is that of failure. The man who does not understand failure is lost. The importance of failure is capital. I am not speaking of what fails. If one has not understood this secret, this aesthetic, this ethic of failure, one has understood nothing, and glory is vain' (16.IV.40, *CJS*, p.300).

There are three other lists of poems written and yet to be written in 1940-1941 (See **Appendix 2E**) in Notebooks Add.56043, 56045 and 56046. Of these, 'Dark's Fidelity' exists in complete draft form, but remains unpublished (see **Appendix 2F**).[13] It is fascinating but ultimately counter-productive to continue to speculate about what may have been written or lost, or never begun. Gascoyne's apparently total recall of people, places and conversations, does not seem to extend so keenly to poems planned or drafted but never published, as I have discovered when showing him long-forgotten poems and translations which I have found in notebooks dating from the late 1930s and c.1950s.[14] He has indicated very clearly in numerous journal entries that many plans and projects invariably came to nothing. However, a real stumbling block lies in a brief, but telling

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[13] Derek Stanford has pointed out that while the collection is entitled ***Poems 1937-42***, there are no pieces dated later than 1941. See footnote to his essay 'David Gascoyne: Poet of Crisis' in *Poetry Quarterly* (autumn 1947), p.174. Further citings as (*POC*).

It seems likely that Gascoyne's Jouve translations, 'Brow', and 'The Two Witnesses' (undated), were drafted during the same period (c.1941) as 'The Moths' and 'Woman and Earth' first published in America in *New Directions*, Vol.7 (1942). 'Jardin du Palais Royale' (no date) in print for the first time in *Poets of Tomorrow*, Third Selection (Hogarth Press 1942), was probably drafted at the same time c.1940-1 as other poems planned to make up 'Reminiscences of Paris' or 'Seven Paris Poems (Suite)': 'A November Night', 'Noctambules', and 'Fête' (dated 'Paris 1938').

[14] For example, Gascoyne simply did not recognize the poems/translations I found in a c.1950 Notebook in the Berg Collection in the New York Public Library. I have edited a selection of them, *Encounter with Silence*, which first appeared in *Temenos Academy Review*, ns.1 (spring 1998), with a shortened introduction, pp. 46-62. A separate pamphlet edition of the collection, with my full introduction was published by Enitharmon Press in October 1998.

comment on 12.XI.39: 'Have recently destroyed practically all my old MSS and papers' (*CJS*, p.273).

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Graham Greene asserted in *The Lawless Roads* that 'Nobody can endure existence without a philosophy.' It is hardly surprising that Gascoyne's obsession in his journals with his own state of mind in the wider context of the human condition, should have accommodated at the same time a burgeoning interest in certain philosophers, in addition to the literary figures who have influenced him to a marked extent. Of the latter, he makes particular reference (*CJS*, p.283, 27.II-I.III.40) to Rimbaud (*Une Saison en Enfer*), Pascal (*Pensées*), Marx and Freud ('who among my generation has escaped their influence?'), Breton ('though that influence has long ceased to be an active one'), Fondane ('an incidental yet greatly fortuitous and important influence'), Miller ('though only indirectly'), Jouve ('to a great extent') and Blanche Jouve ('quite as much'), Jouhandeau ('more a strong but not identical affinity, than an influence'). Brian Merrikin-Hill suggests that 'Gascoyne did not remain a pure Surrealist for very long' because 'he learned other ways of exploring the chaos and emerging with truths, through the influence of Chestov, Berdyaev, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard - but Surrealism gave him a lead into his territory of exploration, being one gate into this territory: there are others.'[15] Later in his article, he adds the names of Hölderlin, Buber, Boehme and Eckhart to the list of philosophers then, quoting Rémy, perceptively examines a way to approach and assess the effect of these influential writers on Gascoyne's development and his writing:

> [...] yet his work is not syncretist or an amalgam; it is with the knowledge that these also travel in the unmapped that he took his own journey. Michel Rémy, meeting the problem of influences, says that the solution of the dilemma is to see the 'influences' as integrant parts of

[15] 'The Transparent Mirror', review of Rémy: *David Gascoyne ou l'urgence de l'inexprimé*, and Breton & Soupault: *The Magnetic Fields*, translated by David Gascoyne, in *Temenos* 7, p.273. Further citings as (*BMHT*). Kathleen Raine, too, rightly points out (Foreword to *CJS*, p.5) that Gascoyne 'was deeply read in the works of European imaginative literature and philosophy', and she identifies 'the Existentialists Kierkegaard and Chestov (whom he rates above the publicist Sartre) besides the German philosophers, mystics (especially Boehme)': she is referring to Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Buber, - and to Maister Eckhart as well as Boehme who are the 'German spiritual masters' according to Rémy (*DGUI*, p.26).

> the writing of the text, which proceeds not in a linear but a tabular manner and is a lateral communication, always free and open, not a plumbing of a known depth (*BMHT*, p.276).

While I would append the names of Pascal, Jung, and Dostoevski, Glyn Pursglove, in his turn, includes Novalis and Swedenborg: Gascoyne's 'early adventures in Surrealism' and his engagement as a translator with the French Surrealist poets, 'were deepened by a growing familiarity with the German Romantic movement and its philosophical-theological background [...]. This steeping in both French and German traditions, without loss of his native Englishness, gave to Gascoyne a voice unique in modern English Poetry'.[16]

The poet has told me (in 1994) that he had read Sartre's *La Nausée* 'within six weeks of its publication' [in 1938] and sent a letter to the French writer asking if he could translate the novel into English. He remembers that Sartre wrote back to him and gave his permission, but nothing was to come of that project either. It is interesting to speculate about the reasons behind Gascoyne's spontaneous response to this publication which, 'seems more like a poem or an incantation than a novel' according to Iris Murdoch.[17] Gascoyne is writing an intimate journal (as did Baudelaire) which, like Sartre's novel is 'densely philosophical' (*IMS*, p.39). However, where Murdoch sees *La Nausée*'s concerns to be 'freedom and bad faith, the character of the bourgeoisie, the phenomenology of perception, the nature of thought, of memory, of art' (Ibid.), Gascoyne's darkly pessimistic *weltanschauung* at this time centred on the writings of a number of European philosophers on the all-important topic of the nature of existence, together with an obsessive and excoriating examination of his own experiences of suffering and anguish, hopelessness, despair and purposelessness, and his inescapable awareness of the abyss or Void. Like Sartre's protagonist, Antoine Roquentin, Gascoyne is lonely and given to introspection. Unlike Roquentin, who is a 'rather colourless character' (*IMS*, p.48), his musings are revelatory and affecting because of his active and unremitting search for meaning and accommodation. Yet both the deeply honest poet and

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[16] Entry on DG in *Contemporary Poets*, 5th edition, (ed.) T. Chevalier (London & Chicago: St. James Press, 1991), p.331.

[17] *Sartre: romantic rationalist*, first published in 1953 (Bowes & Bowes) in the series Studies in Modern European Literature and Thought; here (London: Chatto & Windus, 1987), p.47. Further citings as (*IMS*).

the 'transparent hero' (*IMS*, p.48) are linked in the 'peculiar purity' (p.44) of their descriptive brooding, and in Murdoch's assertion that the only good Roquentin recognizes is 'intelligible being' (*IMS*, p.50).

Bernard Bergonzi comments that 'Gascoyne was affected by existential philosophy, and the painfully intense consciousness in his poems is somewhat reminiscent of Sartre's novel *La Nausée*, which came out during Gascoyne's years in Paris.'[18] 'After reading Fondane and Chestov,' Gascoyne commented to me, 'existentialist philosophy is unsystematic, but Sartre's is very systematic'.[19] When I told the poet about Bergonzi's suggestion, he nodded and said, 'He's probably right'. He wrote in his journal on 27.VII.38, 'Reading a novel such as Jean-Paul Sartre's *La Nausée*, one is forcibly led to speculate on one's own existence' (*CJS*, p.164), and he proceeds to do so on a fairly intense level, wrestling with the concept of what existence is and how to 'realize' it on paper. Clearly this is one of the overwhelming issues that has been and should continue to be the focus of journal entries:

> To try really to experience one's life, that is to say really to feel one's existence, is like trying to build a house with rags and bits of straw with a strong wind blowing. One is constantly beginning again. This journal, for instance: I am continually sitting down to try to realize on paper my existence, to concretize it, to look at it. But the 'real thing' slips away from under the pen, one is left with unfinished, inconclusive fragments, trickeries, illusions, approximations. Then one stops trying to live until the next time (*CJS*, pp.164-5).

Eleven years later, in his essay 'Léon Chestov', he quotes from the Russian philosopher's *All Things Are Possible*:

> There is no mistake about it, nobody *wants* to think. I do not speak here of logical thinking. That, like any other natural function, gives man great pleasure. For this reason philosophical systems, however complicated, arouse real and permanent interest in the public, provided they only require from man the logical exercise of the mind, and nothing else. But to think - really to think - surely this means a relinquishing of logic. It means living a new life. It means a permanent sacrifice of the dearest habits, tastes, attachments, without even the assurance that the sacrifice will bring any compensation.[20]

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[18] *Wartime and Aftermath: English Literature and its background 1939-60* (Oxford University Press, 1993), p.66. Further citings as (*WAA*).

[19] In conversation, Isle of Wight, February 15th/16th 1994.

[20] In *Horizon*, Vol.xx, no.118 (October 1949), p.225. Further citings as (*DGLC*). Also in ***Journal 1936-1937*** (Enitharmon Press, 1980), and in ***David Gascoyne: Selected Prose 1934-1996***, edited by Roger Scott (Enitharmon Press, 1998). Further citings as (*DGSP*).

'Existential philosophy is a struggle for liberation', he writes two pages on, then cites Chestov, as 'the one who is nearest to us' of all the great existential philosophers [the others are Pascal, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche], and 'he is of all recent philosophers the one who is most necessary to a true understanding of the significance of existential philosophy in general and of its role in the crisis of modern thought' (Ibid., p.227).

What appealed initially to Gascoyne in his readings of Kierkegaard was that philosopher's stress on the predicament of the isolated individual (so many journal entries testify to Gascoyne's loneliness and isolation as well as his alienation and *angst*) and his direct invocation of religious faith. Gascoyne was drawn, too, to Heidegger. One of the essential features of the latter's existential philosophy is the clear distinction he makes between 'inauthenticity' and 'authenticity'. As individuals we all begin with an 'inauthentic' understanding of ourselves, seeing others in the world as not significantly different. The transition to an 'authentic' being recognizing our freedom occurs through our experience of *Angst*. In addition, as Dr Thomas Baldwin puts it, 'His [Heidegger's] existentialism is essentially metaphysical'.[21]

It is significant that in the notes on contributors to *Poetry* (London), No.4, (1941), Gascoyne is described by the editor, Tambimuttu, as 'Young English *philosopher* [my emphasis] and poet'.[22] Gascoyne refers to his friendship with Charles R., an artist, and records on 18.1X.38: 'A great deal of the conversation is of a highly philosophical nature, as we share the same interest in Kierkegaard, Dostoevski and the "existential" school' (*CJS*, p.181). At the beginning of November he gives to a substantial journal entry the sub-heading 'The Pit', and discourses in anguish on what is essentially the philosophic-religious context of the verse he had recently written and was to write, collected later in ***Poems 1937-42***. There is, of course, an element of self-dramatization ('"my" individual drama' *CJS*, p.261), but as with Jouve he 'is above all honest',[23] and his writing retains its

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[21] Entry on 'Existentialism' in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, (ed.) Ted Honderich (Oxford University Press, 1995), p.260. Baldwin explains that whereas for Sartre choice in human life is absolutely fundamental, Heidegger sees *Angst* as 'an awareness of the precariousness of a life whose goals and values are not understood as arising from the structure of one's own existence' (Ibid.).

[22] Vol.1 (January-February), on inside of back wrapper.

[23] Martin Seymour-Smith, *Who's Who in Twentieth Century Literature* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1976), pp.184-5.

patent emotional force [I have highlighted the key words and phrases: for '*abyss*' read also 'Void']:

> Everything is irrevocably *hopeless*, everything nevertheless is possible if one has *faith*, everything is *uncertain*: thoughts of *hope and despair* incessantly beating like hammers on the anvil of my mind. There must surely be a breaking-point, a moment when I shall not be able to bear any longer the strain? And then? [...] This is one of those days when I feel finally overwhelmed by the complication of existence, *without refuge*, perilously exposed to the assault of possibility and irrevocability, duration, consciousness. A sort of panic begins to rise. [...] When one has no wall to protect one, one sees that the world is *at the bottom of an abyss*, that it is *dark* and tumultuous here, that we are *the helpless prey of an eternal, terrifying purposelessness*, monster with staring empty eyes and all-devouring jaws. *One is alone* in this appalling shambles. One's only chance of *salvation* is to be able to cry aloud: but how faint is the whisper that one forces out when one would make the whole *immensity of darkness* ring with one's protesting voice! 3.XI.38 (*CJS*, pp.206-7).

He had written on despair in *Blind Man's Buff (fragments from an unpublished notebook)* which appeared in *The Booster* in November the previous year (his emphases):

> Despair, madness, death: *the domain of tragedy*. It is into this domain that all search for the absolute leads: all other absolutes are temporary and dissoluble: they are all doors leading one by one into this labyrinth which is *safe* at last, *but endless*. Despair, the one firm foundation. And the one supreme virtue, courage. Courage, which is the antithesis of the underlying fear to be discovered in everything which is most disgusting in the modern world: courage to build one's life on the foundation of despair.
>
> Despair, and the courage to live it out, are alone capable of restoring grandeur and significance to existence. (Even though despair *denies* grandeur and significance).[24]

The existentialist notion (from Kierkegaard) of the inevitability of anguish may not be articulated specifically in the previous passage, but its underlying presence is very powerfully felt by the reader. Gascoyne had already voiced his acceptance of it in a journal entry on 19.1V.37: 'It is a question of learning to suffer life: *not* in the sense of *passively* suffering it to happen to one, but in the sense that suffering (pain) is one's most *active* experience, since it forces itself upon one's consciousness more definitely and inescapably than any other state' (*CJS*, pp. 94-5). He expresses it a little later (p.268) as 'accepting the essential bitterness of life, though not in a purely pessimistic sense' (Ibid.),

[24] 3me année, No.9 (November 1937), pp.34-5. Also printed in (*DGSP*).

and then in that same entry for 12.IX.39: '[...] what I call *Anguish* (sense of the Void; of being personally implicated in imminent human disaster and in tragic human futility, etc.)' (Ibid.). Gascoyne points out in his pamphlet on Carlyle that that writer was always conscious of the need 'to bear witness to the Divine nature of the true man'.[25] It is Gascoyne's certainty of 'that Divine nature and his simultaneously pained awareness of human weakness,' writes Glyn Pursglove, 'that gives his best work access to a genuine sense of the tragic' (*GPCP*, Ibid.).

Gascoyne, however, while still incontrovertibly aware of the intensity of his feelings and responses to his own problems and to those on the European front where 'a week of severe crisis has begun (22.III.39)', finds 'poetry impossible as yet. Far too close to the experience and the certainty'. What he means by this is that he has come to 'certain unshakable certainties about the present crisis in the development of mankind', but still does not know how to express them (*CJS*, p.255). He wrote in his Chestov essay that, 'The now universal state of human existence cannot be said to be one of continual, profound, everyday faith in the living God. To have real faith in God,' he continues, 'is not at present natural to man in the world' (*DGLC*, p.215).

Some ten years on, he develops further his thoughts on the relationship of God and mankind in an unpublished journal entry dating from 1950:

> Philosophers and the expositors of philosophers have spoken in recent times of 'God's death' and of His 'absence' and of His 'failure', but is it not truly quite evident by now that we should think, rather, of God's withdrawal, and that we should draw from the recognition of this withdrawal as having taken place, certain conclusions such as that we are to blame in that we have offended and disappointed Him? God, at last, withdraws from man in despair, if His creature becomes such a hopeless liar and hypocrite in his frantic attempt to be respectable and righteous at all costs, and to justify himself by autonomous ethical standards of his own, that he is no longer capable of facing God sincerely 'in spirit and in truth'. From the individual, who to become an individual must become an exception, must cease to be as we say 'worldly' in solidarity with a godless, or rather god-ignoring world, God does not ever withdraw. Only the individual, in the sense of the word that originated in the writings of S.K. [Sören Kierkegaard], is able to realize the real Otherness, Oneness and Human subjective proximity of God. [26]

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[25] Quoted by Glyn Pursglove in his entry on Gascoyne in *Contemporary Poets V*, ed. T. Chevalier (London & Chicago: St. James Press, 1991), p.331. Further citings as (*GPCP*).

[26] In an orange notebook dated c.1950, no pagination.

His abiding concern is to be able to articulate a coherent 'vision of man's present spiritual crisis and of the future' (p.256).[27] Gascoyne appears to be driven by a desire to produce poetry that is 'the product of a real contact with spiritual truth, its intensity, its depth, its exaltation, its naked certitude' (*CJS*, 28.V1.39, p.250): this, together with the question of existence, is the other issue of major importance. Adrian Caesar echoes the poet's words in his commentary on Gascoyne and his development in the later 1930s, although I see 1937 to be more realistic than '1936' as an indicator of evidence of a transitional stage:

> The poems Gascoyne wrote from 1936 onwards seek to enunciate spiritual 'truths', and to express clearly his feelings and vision. The best of his work combines an intensity of image and statement which convinces one of the impassioned depths from which he is writing *(DLS*, p.186).

For the epigraph to his last collection, *Street Ballads* (Faber & Faber 1992), Gascoyne's fellow poet and life-long friend, George Barker, chose a quotation from R. Grindley's study, *On Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling*, which has a particular relevance to this discussion of the development of Gascoyne's ontological thought: 'It's not a question of a search for disinterested intellectual truth, but of a personal choice, involving guilt and dread rather than blindness and ignorance'. Derek Stanford, one of the most perceptive of commentators on Gascoyne, has described how for several years dating from the middle of the Second World War, 'David Gascoyne's poems became for me a map of our spiritual crisis'; that 'I recognized in his verse the eternal and spiritual climate of our time'.[28]

Nearly two years earlier, Gascoyne had written in his first letter to Benjamin Fondane, 11.VII.37 about the complex relationship between despair, destruction and creativity, and addressed the notion of *creatio ex nihilo*:

> You see I, no more than you, hold that despair (or rather the negation of despair) is an end in itself. A phrase that I found in Chestov expresses my ambition 'Creation *Ex Nihilo*'. In the destructive element immerse said Conrad, that is what one must do before being able to create, obviously. But most people who would agree with this, do not understand how *absolute*, how extreme this really is. One can strip oneself and yet not be naked. I now hold the opinion that there is no

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[27] He feels that 'Elsewhere' 'was moderately successful,' in terms of what he has been striving to say, but does 'not want to go on writing variations on a single poem' (p.287).

[28] 'David Gascoyne and the Unacademics' in *Meanjin Quarterly* (March 1964), pp.70, 71. Further citings as (*GTU*).

> creative work which is not, for its creator, the result of the need to find some protection against the powers of destruction, a shield against affliction. A work of art should grow like one's skin in response to the hostility of nature. To believe this is the same as believing in *the cry* which arises from us in spite of ourselves is it not? [29]

Fondane's reply,[30] according to Gascoyne, advised him 'so caringly and kindly', that

> no one should approach the experience of real despair with that sort of romanticism which is common amongst adolescents nor with the dilettante attitude of someone enjoying powerful emotional experiences, but only when one is spiritually armed to struggle, like the devil to retain a good reason for living (Ibid., p.26).

After publishing two essays on Léon Chestov in 1929 Fondane, as Gascoyne himself would do towards the end of the next decade, had looked more and more urgently to a kind of existentialism in order to face up to and engage with the agony that is individual human existence.

Towards the end of August 1939, Gascoyne wonders whether or not it is possible that during this crisis he has advanced a little closer to the likelihood of 'getting *beyond despair* without illusion or dishonesty,' and proceeds to engage again with what clearly is for him a vitally important concept: 'creatio ex Nihilo' [see my commentary on the poem 'Ex Nihilo' which is part of the *Miserere* sequence.]

Stanford quotes Bossuet in his essay, aptly entitled 'David Gascoyne: Poet of Crisis': '"At the bottom of everything, one finds inanity and a void",' and points out in turn that there is nothing more inimical to 'art's aspirations [...] than this sense of futility' (*POC*, p.167). Benjamin Fondane, writing about the artist's *angst* when faced with 'the meaning of life and the world' posed the question: 'What if the abyss did have something to say, something important, what if art were precisely its chosen language?'[31] He is

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[29] From 'Meetings with Benjamin Fondane', translated by Robin Waterfield, in *Aquarius* 17/18 (London 1986/87), p.27.

[30] I found a copy of Fondane's letter in Gascoyne's handwriting in one of the notebooks in the British Library. It was published in *Boletin de la Société d'Etudes Benjamin Fondane, BSEBF*, No.3 (printemps 1995), Jerusalem, pp.2-4, and Dr Ramona Fotiade acknowledges my discovery in an article in that issue.

[31] Quoted by Stanford (ibid.), and by Gascoyne in his *A Little Anthology of Existential Thought* in *New Road* 4 (1943), p.202. Further citings as (*DGLA*).

suggesting that it could never have occurred to Kant, Hegel or Schopenhauer that the abyss might well take offence at a formulation of its exclusion from 'the workings of art' (Ibid.).

Hugh MacDiarmid quoted from Chestov: 'The abyss is our element. Flung into it [...] we sprout wings',[32] and Gascoyne was to lean strongly on the last verse of Jouve's poem, 'Sicut Cervus' in the section 'L'Aile du Désespoir' from the collection *Sueur de sang:*

> Le désespoir a des ailes
> L'amour a pour aile nacré
> Le désespoir
> Les sociétés peuvent changer.[33]

This, as I have already pointed out, not only provides the epigraph for the *Miserere* sequence in ***Poems 1937-42***, but also explains the choice of the title *Despair Has Wings* for one of the 'ghost' collections he was planning late in the thirties.

On 22nd August 1939, he writes in his journal, 'Have been trying practically all day long to produce some sort of poem' (*CJS*, p.255). But without success.[34] Perhaps his inability to strike the right note lead not long afterwards to the destruction, to which I have already referred, of most of his old manuscripts and papers. Or perhaps he had come to feel that they lacked significance in view of the urgency of his mission as he saw it then, and his possible future role as prophet: 'Am I to become a sort of Prophet after these days in the Wilderness? [...] I am still a little afraid of ending by going mad' (Ibid.).[35]

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[32] Quoted by Merrikin-Hill (*BHMT*), p.273. D.H. Lawrence provided a preface for Koteliansky's translation of Chestov's *Everything is Possible*: '"Everything is possible" - this is his really central cry. It is not nihilism.' See 'All Things Are Possible by Leo Shestov' [sic] in Prefaces and Introductions to Books in *Phoenix: the Posthumous Papers of D.H. Lawrence*, edited by Edward D. McDonnell (London: Heinemann, 1936, reprinted 1961, 1967, 1970), p.216.

[33] (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1966), p.195.

[34] On 14.VII.1941, he wrote an entry in his journal describing the phase he had been going through: the need for 'integration of personality', quoting Jung's phrase 'the diamond body', in a period characterized by: 'sense of spiritual death, of sterility, of non-progression [...], - sense of separation (severance) from unconscious sources of inspiration, - vision of the utter barrenness of contemporary spiritual reality' (*CJS*, pp.304/5).

[35] There is a strong connection here with Merrikin-Hill's incisive comment in the course of his essay from which I have already quoted: 'The task of the poet has been variously interpreted as to hold up a mirror in which the world may be reflected or to express himself, not out of vainglory or exaltation of *le moi* but as expressing the experience and longings of humanity through himself as vehicle [he quotes Pierre Emmanuel here: "L'être qui dit *Je* dans *les Fleurs du Mal*, c'est chaque lecteur nouveau, et en lui l'Homme de toujours".] Hugh MacDiarmid, the only poet writing in English other than Gascoyne and

The problem is that he is 'right *in the midst* of this spiritual experience'. It is in a response to a passage from Jung's *Psychology and Religion* that Gascoyne demonstrates another application of the phrase *creatio ex nihilo* in relation to the alchemical process:

> The intention of the philosophers was to transform imperfect matter chemically into gold, the panacea, or the elixir vitae, but philosophically or mystically into the divine hermaphroditus, the second Adam, the glorified incorruptible body of the resurrection, or the lumen luminum, the illumination of the human mind or the sapients. As I have shown, Chinese alchemy produced the same idea, that the goal of the opus magnum is the creation of the 'diamond body' (12.VII.41, *CJS*, p.304).

Jung's term,'the diamond body' (see my footnote 34) is found in his *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, and refers to the status of the self which has become through 'the process of individuation' (or 'the integration of personality') something in Gascoyne's words that is 'extraordinarily hard and concentrated, pure, clear, precious and enduring' (*CJS*, ibid.).

Gascoyne's journal entry for 22.VIII.39 continues:

> The essential nature of the experience being *Negation. The Void, das Nichts, Nada,le Néant.* [...] Can find no simile strong enough to convey the utter *blindness of desperation* at the core of all this. Oh, *Anguish!* It goes on multiplying itself indefinitely because it is by nature inarticulate: impossible to express (*CJS*, p.256).

If this despair generally shows itself in men's minds as 'a kind of occasional subconscious tremor - a stirring or vibration of inward *malaise*', argues Stanford, then the seers and prophet-artists in society represent those 'few individuals in whom there dwells what Kierkegaard terms "the Despair which is conscious of being Despair".' He [Stanford] links their 'condition of foresight and vision' with Gascoyne's own phrase from his Hölderlin essay: 'knowledge accompanied by damnation'; Stanford comments shrewdly that 'despair is viewed by Gascoyne as the sole starting-point of the truth, and non-despair as the hall-mark of the Philistine, the badge of Berdyaev's "bourgeois of the spirit"' (*POC*, p.168).

D.H. Lawrence to be greatly influenced by Chestov, wrote to R.E. Muirhead, 'I do not write poetry - I am merely the vehicle for something greater than myself' (*BHMT*), p.273.

Despair is the source of what Stanford terms the 'rape of hope'; by this, with a Marxist inflection, he means that in present-day society man is 'the prisoner of economic history, a predestined digit, a mind deprived of chance' and quotes from Kierkegaard's *The Sickness unto Death:* 'The loss of possibility signifies either that everything has become necessary to a man or that everything has become trivial. The determinist or the fatalist is in despair, and in despair he has lost his self, because for him everything is necessary' (*POC*, p.169). Stanford takes 'Spirit' to represent 'awareness of possibility' and 'Reason' to be 'the logic of necessity'. It becomes clear that as he sees it, Gascoyne who was strongly influenced by Kierkegaard during the gestation of ***Poems 1937-42***, regarded the Void as analogous to 'denial of the Spirit'. He quotes Gascoyne: 'When Reason banishes the Spirit [...] Man immediately begins to lose his ancient sense of mission and of purpose on this earth [...] For Man cannot endure for long the constant imminence of the aimless Void which is concomitant with denial of the Spirit'. Stanford adds that what Gascoyne calls 'the Void' 'may be known or felt by us, but not represented; since a vacuum cannot be described, save in its own terms - by absence and silence' (Ibid.).

The concept of the artist as prophet and spiritual leader developed by Nietzsche must have contributed in some measure to Gascoyne's awareness of his mission as a poet at the end of the 1930s. Still in Paris in August 1939, Gascoyne is reading Nietzsche's *Dawn of Day* which 'disturbs' him. (*CJS*, p.257); a week earlier he had been re-reading 'January' from Nietzsche's *The Wanderer and his Shadow* (p.253). Some forty-five years later, he told Michel Rémy that for him 'Nietzsche's idea of the "superman" [...] means simply the human struggle to become that for which man was created. Man evolves towards a point where he will assume being what he is essentially'. He also acknowledges that his belief in 'the underlying idea of recommencement, of rebirth' is linked with Nietzsche's idea of Eternal Return.[36] Kevan Johnson has suggested that 'Nietzsche's Zarathustra is an electrifying influence in [Gascoyne's] verse, presiding over elemental strife – "Preach to us with great avalanches" - and the soul's plea for true peace: "Grant us extraordinary grace,/O spirit hidden in the dark in us and deep,/And bring to light the dream out of our sleep". At this point,' he argues, 'it's clear that what Gascoyne learnt

[36] *Temenos* interview, op. cit. p.268.

from Surrealism was not how to play but how to plumb his own depths, to explore what Apollinaire called "internal universes".'[37] Many years later, the English poet would write: 'Nietzsche's "God is Dead" means man is also dead, devoid of spirit. The early and mid-twentieth century is the time of the Open Tomb.'[38] In *An Appetite for Poetry*, Frank Kermode has written that 'Heidegger called Hölderlin the poet of the Time between – between the departure and the return of the gods – the midnight of the world's night'.[39] This is precisely what we should understand by Gascoyne's use of the term 'the open tomb'. Kathleen Raine argues that he 'saw the darkness of the period as that of Christ entombed, awaiting Resurrection. The Russian vision of *apokatastasis* – the restoration of all things – was very real to him'.[40]

In c.1936 Gascoyne completed the draft of a Surrealist film scenario, entitled 'The Wrong Procession'; it was not published until Rémy included an updated, rewritten version (1981), *Procession to the Private Sector*, in his study of Gascoyne who included two passages from Nicolas Berdyaev in his 'Author's Note', and added quotations as 'Voice Overs' from Wittgenstein, Rimbaud and Nietzsche 'as an appendix' to his film script (*DGUI*, pp.159, 172-40).[41] Merrikin-Hill asserts that 'The last [the Nietzsche quotation] is of great importance in the understanding of Gascoynian antinomies: presence/present; being as être/being as étant; reality/the real world' (*BMHT*, p.279):

> *Voice Over:*
>
> '- The real world - unattainable? Unattained, at any rate. And if unattained also *unknown*. Consequently also no consolation, no redemption, no duty; how could we have a duty towards something unknown?
> (The grey of dawn. First yawnings of reason...)
> - The "real world" - an idea no longer of any use, not even a duty any longer - an idea grown useless, superfluous, *consequently* a refuted idea: let us abolish it!
> (Broad daylight; ...all free spirits run riot.)

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[37] *Poetry Review*, Vol.85, No.2 (1995), p.87.
[38] *The Sun at Midnight* (Enitharmon Press, 1970), p.13. Further citings as (*DGSAM*).
[39] *Essays in Literary Interpretation* (London: Collins, 1989), p.87.
[40] In 'David Gascoyne', her obituary notice in *The Tablet* (19th January 2002), p.30.
[41] The published scenario could not include a long poem (which these extracts replace) written to be incorporated at a specific point in the text: 'I do not think I was ever able to produce a poetic text suitable for this purpose,' writes Gascoyne, and 'I am no longer capable of producing the type of poem that might be appropriate' (p.159). Not so: I came across the poem in a Notebook in the British Library, and it was included in the recent BBC Radio 3 production by Sean Street: *'Procession to the Private Sector: A Surrealist film scenario by David Gascoyne'*, broadcast in the 'Between the Ears' series on Saturday, 13th June 1998. Both scenario and poem are included in (*DGSP*).

- We have abolished the real world: what world is left? the apparent world perhaps?...But no! *With the real world we have also abolished the apparent world!*
Mid-day; moment of the shortest shadow; end of the longest error; zenith of mankind; INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA.)

Friedrich NIETZSCHE
(From: *How the "Real World" at last Became a Myth*, in *Twilight of Idols*.)
(*DGUI*, p.174)

Gascoyne had noted in his journal (16.VIII.39) a first meeting with Frederick B. whom he describes as a 'Dostoevskian - underworld sort of figure who 'immediately understood what I meant when I started talking about "the Void", "the end of History", "*the open tomb*" [my emphasis], "the coming spiritual revolution", etc.' (*CJS*, pp.253-4).

Perhaps one way of engaging with Gascoyne's change in approach and sensibility from ***Hölderlin's Madness*** onwards is to take note of a reply he made to Rémy with whom he was discussing his deep interest in philosophy at the same time as he was writing the poems that would be collected in the 1943 publication, ***Poems 1937-42***: 'Marx speaks of the objective outer world and Kierkegaard of the soul's inner world', and how he felt the need to attempt 'to synthesize the two' in a new philosophy, that of 'dialectical supermaterialism'.[42] Stanford was shown the original text by Gascoyne in the 1940s, and comments on this 'book on Existentialist thought in which the material offered in quotation outweighed that of the original text,' understanding why the compilation never found a publisher. He acknowledges Gascoyne's interest in philosophy, but sees it as 'a concern not with knowledge but with wisdom. For methods of philosophical procedure and the precision-instruments of logic, he showed small curiosity.' His conclusion is one with which the poet would immediately agree: 'Philosophy as a separate study, with its own distinctive discipline, is hardly Gascoyne's *forte* even though it may be one of his obsessions' (*GTU*, p.75). Nevertheless, Stanford is quick to point out that 'the energy and time devoted to it has not been lost on the poet', and that 'besides its direct fruits - a long

[42] Ibid. p.268. Gascoyne explains in his 'Afterword' to (*CJS*) how he proposed to 'reconcile metaphysics with revolutionary ideology by means of what I chose to nominate with the neologism "logontology" (logos ontology),' and acknowledges his 'complete lack of the necessary training and discipline'. The title chosen for this book that never found a publisher derives from 'an exploration of alchemy - *The Sun at Midnight* - which is indicative of a millenarian/utopian optimism in the face of the blackness of the mid-20th century human condition [...]' (p.382). ***The Sun at Midnight,*** from which I quoted earlier, is an entirely different, and later, work.

essay on Léon Chestov and a monograph on Thomas Carlyle - it has had repercussions on his thoughts, leading to a clarifying and deepening of Gascoyne's ideas in verse' (Ibid.).

Gascoyne's *A Little Anthology of Existentialist Thought*, (1943) to which I have already referred in a footnote, is not a truncated version of 'the opus' he had provisionally named *The Sun at Midnight*, but represents all that we have in published form that demonstrates his direct engagement with the doctrines of various philosophers. An introduction of three pages to which a quotation from Karl Jaspers provides the epilogue, is followed by extracts from Lichtenberg, Saint-Martin, Joubert, Kierkegaard, Chestov, Victoria Welby, Denis Saurat, Elie Faure, Martin Buber and Fondane, then by passages from his friend Roger Roughton (who had gassed himself in Dublin two years before) and from the New Testament.[43]

During the course of that same interview with Rémy, Gascoyne comments: 'Philosophy and poetry are passionate, really, for they are the communication of a wonder, and the greatest of wonders is to find oneself *living*' (p.272).

Wondering about Marcel Jouhandeau as an influence on his 'inmost development so far' (*CJS*, p.283) in February/March of 1940, he decides that, although he 'appreciates and admires Jouhandeau's writings,' he can't avoid the feeling that 'there's a certain flaw somewhere, something that I don't quite trust: perhaps it is a too over-balancing proportion of "the aesthetic" in his attitude. In any case,' he goes on, 'compared with Kierkegaard for instance, he is only a minor figure [...]' (p.284). On I.III.40, he writes under the sub-heading, 'Kierkegaard', for whom he feels an 'astonished veneration':

> I have now been reading about him, and odd texts by him, off and on, for these three years or more, of course, and the main features of his life and thought have long been more or less familiar to me (all the thought and study I devoted to existential philosophy last year, when working on *The Last Judgement*) (*CJS*, p.286).[44]

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[43] (*DGLA*), pp.176-206). Gascoyne's introduction ends with the assertion that 'The crisis in modern philosophy, of which the Existentialist movement is so acutely symptomatic, will perhaps find its resolution only when it is generally realized that the true Christian doctrine is in fact the embodiment of an absolutely practical philosophical attitude, and that it is this attitude which has been responsible for the vital continuity of the whole intellectual tradition of Occidental man' p.178.

[44] This text has not survived, but it is just possible that it may be in a manuscript collection in one of the libraries of an American University.

He is forcibly struck by 'the huge living importance of his life and work' after looking (before Christmas 1939) through Kierkegaard's *journals* in the French translation by Jean Wahl.[45] 'What a figure!' he enthuses. 'Tremendous, even terrifying in complexity: a sombre palace full of mirrors, traps and winding corridors - I can see hardly any other figure so outstandingly remarkable in the whole of the 19th century.' Marx and even Rimbaud diminish somewhat as luminary figures when set against the Danish philosopher: 'About Kierkegaard I now feel as though an integral part of myself had always been waiting to understand him perfectly; as though that part of me were somehow inseparably bound up with his character. - *I understand him through myself, I understand myself through him!*' Gascoyne sees Kierkegaard as a mine so rich that it can never be exhausted by commentary or analysis:

> I can hardly doubt that in my own case there are certain marked affinities between my own mind and nature and that of K. I have always been naturally apt to understand more immediately than most people his complex dialectic of inner contradiction. Irony, melancholy, anguish, - the mask of secrecy, - demoniac multiplicity, - the conflict between the 'aesthetic' and the 'ethical', the poet and the philosopher, between the individually particular and the Absolute, - all are concepts which I can at once grasp through my most intimate personal experience. They have never been merely intellectual abstractions or generalizations for me (pp.286-8).[46]

An understanding of Gascoyne's view of religion and Christianity at that time is clearly crucial to an appreciation of the religious concerns and preoccupations that lie at the heart of so many of ***Poems 1937-42***, not only the *Miserere* sequence which forms the first section of that collection. Charles Sisson finds 'in Gascoyne's work [...] a recurrent, one might say permanent, Christian reference, very different in kind from what is found in the later Eliot. There is no "constructing something, on which to rejoice", but a continual tentativeness, as of a man testing his perception of the truth, so that it is present in the poems labelled "metaphysical" (or "metapsychological") and "personal" as well as in those explicitly classified as "religious"'.[47] After leaving Salisbury Cathedral Choir

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[45] He is referring to *Etudes Kierkegaardiennes*, (Paris, 1938).

[46] It is particularly interesting that Gascoyne also issues a note of warning to himself. While acknowledging that Kierkegaard's philosophy is 'of the greatest spiritual aid and inspiration', he also feels the need to 'attempt to calculate, fully to realize, the extent to which he *may* represent for one a snare, even a serious *danger*.' He means by this that Kierkegaard's thought 'may tend to encourage and thus aggravate the auto-destructive, i.e. *demoniac* element [...]' (Ibid.), p.288.

[47] C.H. Sisson: *English Poetry 1900-1950: An Assessment* (Manchester: Carcanet New Press, 1971, re-issued 1981), p.257. Further citings as (*SEP*).

School, Gascoyne had moved to London for secondary studies at the Regent Street Polytechnic where 'we sang twice a day and three times on Sundays, and there were many hours of religious instruction', and he 'reacted against all that', as he told Rémy:

> Then I met the French Surrealists in Paris with their specifically French form of anti-clericalism. I have never been a practising Christian and I don't go to Church. I read Kierkegaard, who was very radical, and authentically religious; he was against the compromises and commercialism of the churches. It is true that I have used the figure of Christ and I would be an apostate if I were to say I do not believe in Christ and in the Second Coming, but as Kierkegaard has said, one has to struggle in order to believe.' [48]

'Much of Gascoyne's] poetry after 1938,' observes David Perkins, 'is couched in theological terms and spoken in despair.'[49] A.T. Tolley notes 'the new religious quality' in Gascoyne's 1943 collection, with its 'visionary poems of an often harrowing religious and philosophic intensity unusual in poets of his generation',[50] while Kevan Johnson places Gascoyne's achievement in ***Poems 1937-42*** on a level with that of the greatest of English religious poets, 'meriting comparison with the holy sonnets of Donne and Hopkins', with reference to the 'awful concentration which the poet brings to bear on God and Man in this intensely religious collection' (*JSP*, p.87). Sisson draws a different analogy: 'David Gascoyne is far from Lionel Johnson, but he is close to Thomas Traherne and to Henry Vaughan the Silurist' (*SEP*, p.259). Elizabeth Jennings has described Gascoyne as 'a tormented and greatly gifted religious poet'.[51] She, too, accepting that her subject is a mystical poet, believes that his work 'leads directly back to the visionary poetry of Vaughan, Herbert and Traherne,' and argues that 'it is emphatically of this time and this place – concrete, rooted, exact'.[52]

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[48] *Temenos* interview, p.268. He wrote in his essay 'A Kind of Declaration' [conducting an imaginary interview with himself]: 'I have received the benefit of a conventional Christian upbringing, and still believe, in fortunately still recurrent moments of certain conviction, in the unprecedented occurrence of the Incarnation and in the meaningfulness of the term Resurrection. At the same time, perhaps as a Chestovian existential "thinker", Original Sin (Knowledge) and the Fall of Man are undoubted facts for me.' (*DGUI*), p.153. He has said: 'I have described myself as a spiritually displaced person', and 'an unorthodox Christian'.

[49] *A History of Modern Poetry: Modernism and After* (Harvard University Press, 1987), p.181. Further citings as (*HMP*).

[50] On DG in *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Poetry in English*, ed. Ian Hamilton (Oxford University Press, 1994), p.182.

[51] *Poetry Today* (1959-60) (Longmans Green & Co. for the British Council & National Book League, 1961), p.32.

[52] 'The Restoration of Symbols: a study of the poetry of David Gascoyne' in *Every Changing Shape* (Longmans, 1961), p.190. Further citings as (*EJROS*).

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In May 1943, Gascoyne jotted down the synopsis of a proposed autobiographical work, 'Epilogue to an Escapade', on the blank rear leaf of his copy of Collin de Planchy's *Dictionnaire Infernal* (Paris, 1863). This aborted project was clearly intended to be a retrospective examination in eleven chapters of his earlier engagement with Surrealism (and presumably with Communism) and with 'Surrealist Personalities'. The last two chapter headings are particularly interesting in their relevance to my discussion of the context of production of the poems from the years 1938-41 (as well as ***Hölderlin's Madness***): X: 'Crise de Conscience'; XI: 'Departure on a New Quest, Summer 1937'.[53] The new collection, ***Poems 1937-42***, published in December 1943,[54] represents in a very real sense the product of this 'New Quest' following his first contact with Jouve and Fondane and dissatisfaction with Surrealism: here is a crystallization of his developing philosophical framework and rapprochement with his own psyche, together with the search for a poetic language which looked above all to acknowledge and to privilege the spiritual. He had written in his journal on 16.1X.37:

> I care really for the life of the spirit, the 'aspiration without end'. I need to remember, then, that the life of the spirit can become starved and tenuous and scant because of the lack of nourishment. It is the mortal earth and flesh that feeds the deathless flame. To meet the spirit in the street, to find the spirit in the bloodshot gaze of the dispossessed, the bestial, the fallen, the anguished and the mad; even in the inarticulate

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[53] the other chapter headings read as follows: 'I. Introductory Preamble (the scope of the book; definitions, etc.); II. Paris, Autumn 1933; III. Great Maze Pond; IV. Paris, Summer 1935; V. and VI. Surrealist Personalities; VII. Propagating the gospel; VIII. London, Summer 1936. International S.[urrealist] Exhibition; IX. Barcelona, Autumn 1936.' I am indebted once again to Alan Clodd for a photocopy of this page from the book, which bears Gascoyne's signature of ownership and is dated London, May 1943.

[54] The year 1943, in the middle of the war, was significant in terms of publications in poetry, philosophy and the novel: apart from Gascoyne's ***Poems 1937-42***, Tambimuttu's *Poetry* (London) Press brought out together with Kathleen Raine's *Stone and Flower* (with drawings by Barbara Hepworth), Michael Hamburger's *Poems of Hölderlin* and W.S. Graham's *Cage Without Grievance*. Collections by Lawrence Durrell, George Woodcock, Terence Tiller, Anne Ridler, J.F. Hendry and D.S. Savage also came out in 1943. It was the year when Henry Green, Graham Greene and Patrick Hamilton brought out new novels, Jean-Paul Sartre published *L'Etre et le Néant*, and Jouve issued an anthology of his own poems, *Les Témoins*, and an edition of Baudelaire's *Poésie*.

> and sane, the terribly sane (the moment of doubt of the complacent and the almost dead). Dare to be strong. Dare to burn.[55]

Here, too, Gascoyne is seen to combine authentic philosophical questioning with a lyrical intensity which reflects the acute anxiety provoked by the continuing drama of his own existence,[56] together with a sense of the *zeitgeist*, his agonised awareness of the ever-worsening political situation in Europe, characterized so appropriately by William Empson in the title of his second collection, *The Gathering Storm* (Faber & Faber 1940). Kathleen Raine has commented acutely that 'It is certain that what gives such power to his poetry is its grounding in philosophy, his profound reading of the German and Russian philosophers at that time, and ever since'.[57]

Gascoyne admits to being surprised in his journal entry for 4.IX.41 by the direction taken by his poetry which 'seems to stumble onwards blindly towards goals of its own kind I myself certainly would never at one time have suspected.' He is more precise:

> (Bareness, sobriety, simplicity, formal discipline, clarity of pattern, - themes drawn from *Nature*, restricted palette of only the more subdued colourings, - a certain blunt, chill, 'pensive' interior music ...) (*CJS*, p.313).

This concern with the development of his poetic language, together with other comments which I have already quoted, seems to chime with Julian Symons's point about the thirties, in a literary sense 'a self-contained movement', which 'involved a very particular use of language,' and which 'was much more "aesthetic" than appeared at the time.'[58] In Gascoyne's introductory note to a selection of 'some of the various types of verse I have been trying to write during the last two or three years', published in 1942,[59] he does not deny the attraction of 'poetry of the "magical" category' which 'may be more stimulating,

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[55] This appears in print for the first time in the appendix to my edition of Gascoyne's previously unpublished novella, *April*, from 1937 (Enitharmon Press, 2000), p.122. Further citings as (*DGA*).

[56] In July 1941 he was to write: 'During the last two years, more or less, I have truly been as one who is dead' (12.VII.41, *CJS*, p.301).

[57] In a letter sent to me, dated Oct. 29th 2000.

[58] In a review of the Thirties number of *The Review*, ed. Ian Hamilton, in *The London Magazine*, ns. Vol.4, no.7 (October 1964), p.85. Symons, poet, critic, novelist, was the editor of the periodical *Twentieth Century Verse* (1937-39).

[59] *Poets of Tomorrow*, Third Selection (Hogarth Press), p.25. The poems selected were: 'Lines', 'A Wartime Dawn', 'Walking at Whitsun', 'Chambre d'Hôtel', 'Jardin du Palais Royal', 'Farewell Chorus', 'The Plummet Heart', 'Phantasmagoria'. All but the last two were reprinted in ***Poems 1937-42***.

more immediately satisfying to write,' but states his allegiance now to poetry 'resulting from conflict between the instinctive poetic impulse and the impersonal discipline, the unadorned sobriety of realistic "sense"'. In the long term it may be more rewarding, and more consoling. The sensitivity, the integrity and intelligence of the visionary poet, the emotional charge and intensity of the language, together with his 'voracious' (*CJS*, p.250) imagination reflected in the sheer visuality of the verse accentuated by the tonal quality of Sutherland's original illustrative designs, is summed up in Stephen Spender's 1944 *Horizon* review of ***Poems 1937-42*** which celebrates Gascoyne's achievement: 'The feeling of a poet writing each poem *with his whole self* (my emphasis) today is, indeed, very rare.'[60] And this perceptive observation of Gascoyne's *awareness* is borne out in two recently published journal entries, the first dated Monday 13th January 1937: 'I want to be completely aware equally of myself and of other people, to have a sense of being deeply implicated in life, and to be always completely honest with myself and with other people' (*DGA*, p.108). The second extract from c.April/May, 1937 forms part of a letter to Joan S.:

> To put it another way: I have come to believe, to *know*, that one must not only live *from within, outwards*, but also, simultaneously, *from without, inwards*. Only thus is a proper irrigating flow of circulation kept going in the mind and/or spirit (*DGA*, p.118).

With difficulty, the poet engages with the contradictions involved in *living* and thinking painfully and obsessively about it and the human condition: he is caught between the hope of happiness and the frustration of that hope in a world where the nature of human reality is 'intolerable [...] when devoid of all spiritual, metaphysical dimension' (*DGIP*' p.xix). Gascoyne confronts the tragedy of *being* in this world.[61] He is, Anthony Cronin points out, 'a poet with a vision of human society, its corruption and its possibilities of

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[60] Vol.IX, No.51 (March): 'Lessons of Poetry 1943', p.212. David Daiches, too, made this point more generally that same year in his essay, 'Contemporary Poetry in Britain': 'The condition of their [many new and promising poets] regaining their ability to write good poetry even in war time was a simple but a profound one. They had to recognize that a poet must be more than a diagnostician: he must not write simply with his critical faculties: in writing poetry he must use the whole man'. *Poetry* (Chicago), Vol.LXII, 1943, p.152. Further citings as (*DDCPB*).

[61] I have appropriated here a phrase used by Frank Kermode in his review of The *Collected Poems of William Empson*, ed. John Haffenden, in *London Review of Books* (22 June 2000), p.10. Wallace Stevens once described poetry as 'an unofficial view of being'. Quoted by Michael Hofmann in *Behind the Lines* (London: Faber & Faber, 2001), p.3.

redemption, passionately concerned with the true nature and conditions of human liberty'.[62]

A contemporary's description of Gascoyne at the beginning of the war is not only revealing, but would seem to authenticate my analysis of the poet's state of mind and his world-view at this time. John Lehmann, poet, novelist, critic and influential publisher, presents the young poet 'home from Paris and looking rather lost and ghost-like in London-at-war', on whom the situation 'had [...] the effect of spiritual revelation'. Lehmann and Gascoyne used to meet for lunch or dinner, 'or go pub-crawling in the black-out', and

> He would describe to me the new philosophy he was trying to work out, the new visionary poems he was writing, the old poems he was revising and which seemed to him to foretell symbolically what had actually taken place in the world; [...] His central idea was that the war was nothing but a surface manifestation of some far deeper psychological disturbance in the world-mind that no-one was really conscious of: an 'experience of the void' were the only words he could find to describe it.[63]

David Perkins remarks that the poet 'pictures the world as a night, dark pit, empty void, hell, and the like, a place of meaninglessness, guilt, rage and torment, from which there is no escape' *(DPDG*, p.181), but Nicholas de Jongh refers to Gascoyne's post-Surrealist poetry 'of Christian and religious *hopefulness* [my emphasis]',[64] and the epigraph to *Miserere* of four lines from Jouve (quoted below on page 29) would also counter Perkins's assertion, though undoubtedly there is a play of oppositions. Furthermore, so many of these poems, despite the anguish and despair, are lit by a radiant light which underscores the possibility for man to transcend the darkness of this world. W.S. Milne has argued convincingly in a recent review that for Gascoyne, 'transcendence represents a spiritual climax where poetry and truth coalesce.'[65] John Press, in turn, notes that one of the themes in this collection is that of a 'longing for spiritual certainty.'[66]

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[62] 'Poetry and Ideas – II: David Gascoyne' in *London Magazine*, Vol.4, No.7 (July 1957), p.55. Further quotations from this article will be referenced *(ACPI)*.

[63] *I Am My Brother*, Autobiography II (Longmans 1960), p.33.

[64] Profile: 'The metaphysician who sought a healing touch' in *Arts Guardian* (3 October 1978), p.8.

[65] 'Knocking Down Barriers': a review of Gascoyne's *Selected Poems* (Enitharmon Press) in *Agenda*, Vol.31, No.1 (summer 1999), p.78.

[66] Entry on Gascoyne in *20th Century Poetry*, Great Writers Student Library, ed. James Vinson (London: Macmillan Press, 1983), p.189. Further citings as (*JPDG*).

Certainly, Gascoyne's passionate commitment to search for truth in his poetry[67] echoes that in prose of the existentialist philosophers, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Sartre who were preoccupied by the possibility of authenticity.[68] What he particularly admired in Pierre Jean Jouve is clarified in an incomplete, unpublished draft in a notebook from c.1950 in which he stresses Jouve's concern for the authenticity of being allied to the notion of poetry as 'newly realized truth':

> Even among the poems that Jouve would now prefer to be forgotten, anterior to the first volume of his Poetic works, the long *Prayer of 1923*, written when this poet was thirty-five, remains still remarkable and valuable because of the blunt unhesitating force of robust sincerity that fills each line. It will always keep the freshness of a genuine immediate utterance of newly realized truth.[69]

Apropos of ***Poems 1937-42***, Kenneth Allott draws attention to 'the style that has emerged from earlier experimentation. Perhaps,' he continues, 'I should have written "styles", for the book has several manners.'[70] It is a fact that Gascoyne's language poses problems: at times he writes with a pure lyricism,[71] at times there is an arrhythmic awkwardness, as though in his prophetic role, a lone voice out of the darkness (prefiguring the Solitary of the later ***Night Thoughts***), he is overstraining in his desire to express the overwhelming nature of his despairing vision and its significance for mankind. A.T. Tolley admits the 'uneven quality' of Gascoyne's writing,[72] Perkins contends that Gascoyne 'does not sing, enchant or reassure. He appalls. And he is an imperfect craftsman; [...] his rhythms and phrasing can lapse into honest prose'

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[67] Anthony Cronin confirms Gascoyne's achievement in this regard: 'What is most striking in fact about the early poems contained in the volume ***Poems 1937-42*** is the moving personal honesty of so many of them' (*ACPI*, p.51). However, Gascoyne told Michèle Duclos in 1984 that while the search for truth is 'a fundamental theme in my work,' he is 'free of that now: no one can attain the Truth'. He quotes Fondane who wrote to him before the war: 'We don't find Truth, but the Truth takes possession of us'. Gascoyne goes on to say that 'all words with capital letters like Truth, Justice, Democracy are ultimately a source of tyranny. [...] Authenticity, truth [...] always remains an ideal'. Interview in *Cahiers sur la poésie*, no.2, numéro special David Gascoyne (Université de Bordeaux III, 1984), p.15). Further citings as (*MDI*).

[68] Gascoyne told Arta Lucescu-Boutcher that 'The refusal to face one's death is what Heidegger calls inauthenticity'. This is taken from the typescript: 'Interview with David Gascoyne on Benjamin Fondane', dated February 1992, p.11. Futher citings as (*ALBI*).

[69] 'The Philosophic Work in the Writings of Pierre Jean Jouve', in an orange notebook, c.1950, in the British Library Manuscript collection. No pagination.

[70] Allott (ed.), *The Penguin Book of Contemporary Verse* (Penguin Books, 1950, etc.), p.247.

[71] John Barnard would seem to agree: 'Purity of motive and purity of diction mark the best of Gascoyne's work,' he writes in his review of recent collections by George Barker, Gascoyne and John Heath-Stubbs and Kathleen Raine in 'Still at it', *The Review*, no.16 (October 1966), p.23.

[72] Entry on DG in *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Poetry in English*, ed. Ian Hamilton (Oxford University Press, 1994), p.182.

(*DPHMP*, p.182). Gavin Ewart, Gascoyne's friend and fellow poet from the thirties, finds the poetry in ***Poems 1937-42*** 'much more controlled, less formless'.[73] Michael Schmidt argues perceptively that Gascoyne 'developed skill in writing long, penetrating sentences, full of suspensions, hesitations, and dramatic involutions in his prose poems as well as his verse poems. Often the sentence leads him astray. Equally often it brings him nearer to the dark opponent from whom he tries to wrest some meaning.'[74] Grevel Lindop points to Gascoyne's 'dauntingly austere vision' and observes that the poems 'lack fluency and suggest a man conscientiously wrestling with language rather than intuitively at home in it,' but both Perkins and Lindop agree that what is so valuable is his sincerity and integrity, his 'sensitivity to loneliness and the bleakest aspects of twentieth-century European society.'[75]

Gascoyne, 'with a tense, nervous spirituality explores,' in G.S. Fraser's vivid turn of phrase, 'the "bad lands" of the modern consciousness.' In so doing, he accepts 'the risk of seeming often thin, and strained, and strident'.[76] 'Thin' is not an epithet that seems appropriate, but 'strained' and 'strident' together reflect in my view the sheer weight and intensity of feeling and imagination and urgent need for truthfulness expressed in the poems of 1937-42, particularly those written in the shadow of imminent catastrophe and during the first two to three years of the second World War.

It is Terence Tiller who expresses most acutely the empathic response of a fellow poet to Gascoyne's collection of 1943. He admitted freely on the BBC Third Programme in 1946 that his initial response to Gascoyne's poetry had been one of 'resentment'. He went on: 'It is hard to say why. His verbal idiom and his idiom of thought, were not more foreign to me than, say, those of Rilke; far less foreign than those of Dylan Thomas. Yet with these poets the resentment did not, as it did with Gascoyne, refuse even to try to understand or to hope to like. Something else was wrong in my approach to Gascoyne.'[77]

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[73] In 'A Voice from the Darkness', his review of *Collected Poems* (1965), in *London Magazine* (Nov. 1965), p.90. Further citings as (*GEVFD*).

[74] *An Introduction to 50 Modern Poets*, Pan Literary Guides (Pan Books, 1979), p.287. Further citings as (*MSI*).

[75] 'Poetry in the 1930s and 1940s' in *The Penguin History of Literature*, Vol.7, The Twentieth Century, ed. Martin Dodsworth (Penguin Books, 1994), p.295. Further citings as (*GLP*).

[76] *Vision and Rhetoric*. Studies in Modern Poetry (London: Faber & Faber, 1959), p.253.

[77] From a photocopy of the typescript of 'David Gascoyne', written by Tiller, produced by Patric Dickinson, broadcast on Monday, 9th December 1946, 8.20-8.40 p.m., p.1. Further citings as (*TTG*).

This is the beginning of a most interesting and – as the remainder of the talk makes clear – insightful commentary. And Tiller's appreciation was heard by Gascoyne, living then, at 37 Downside Crescent, Belsize Park, who responded in turn by writing to Tiller the following day: 'You said very exactly several of the things I've most wanted to express'.[78]

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The opening section of ***Poems 1937-42*** is entitled *Miserere*, a sequence of poems which first appeared in its complete form in 1942 in Tambimuttu's anthology *Poems in Wartime,*[79] with the addition of 'Sanctus' to the seven already written and previously published between 1938 and 1941.[80] For reasons that will become apparent, it will be necessary to refer also to 'Elsewhere', 'Concert of Angels' and 'Requiem'[81] which ought to have been included in ***Poems 1937-42***. The titles of the *Miserere* sequence clearly have a religious significance.[82]. In 1982, Gascoyne commented, 'I don't use Latin titles in my poems nowadays; when I was young I thought it was impressive' (*DGNTS*). He told Michel Rémy that he has always had a liking for foreign language or Latin titles: 'Certain

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[78] Extract from a photocopy of the original, dated 'December 10th,'46'. Gascoyne hoped that they could meet.

[79] (Faber & Faber), pp.67-73. 'Tenebrae', 'Pieta', and 'Lachrymae' appeared in July 1942 in Norman Nicholson's *An Anthology of Religious Verse* (Penguin Books) on pp. 74, 27, 73 respectively.

[80] Gascoyne states in a reading he made forty years later for Norwich Tapes that *Miserere* 'was written shortly before the war', but I'm not sure that his memory is accurate here: 'Sanctus' and 'Ecce Homo' may well have been completed before September 1939, but they were first published in 1942 and 1940 respectively. *David Gascoyne and Ann Ridler read and discuss a selection of their own poems* in 'The Critical Forum' series (Norwich Tapes Ltd., Battle, Sussex, 1982). Further citings as (*DGNTS*).

[81] The first two were not published until 1946 in Miron Grindea's *Adam International Review*, nos. 159/60 and 156/57 respectively, but Gascoyne has said that they 'may well have been written earlier, perhaps at the same time as the "Requiem"' (*DGICP*, pp.xviii-xvix). He has dated 'Requiem' as 1938-40, though the first draft was written in 1937. 'Elsewhere' was already written by August 1939 (*CJS*,p.257), and in September of that year he writes of his intention to include it with the collection of poems he is sending to T.S. Eliot to which I have already referred. 'Concert of Angels' is dated '1937-8' in the *Adam* printing.

[82] *Miserere* relates to Psalm LI, the Latin version of which begins 'Have mercy on me, O God'; 'Pieta' is from the Latin 'pity' and refers specifically in painting to a representation of the Virgin with the dead Christ across her knees; 'De Profundis' from the Latin 'out of the depths' of misery and dejection, draws from Psalm CXXX; 'Kyrie' is an abbreviation of 'Kyrie eleison', 'Lord have pity', a form of prayer in all the ancient Greek liturgies, retained in the Roman Catholic mass, and one of the responses to the Commandments in the Anglican ante-communion service; 'Lachrymae' is a version of the Latin 'lachryma Christi' (Christ's tear); 'Ex Nihilo', the Latin 'out of nothing'; the Latin 'Sanctus' refers to the hymn 'Holy, holy, holy' that occurs immediately after the preface in the celebration of the Eucharist, and

of these titles [in *Miserere*] refer to particular sections of the religious service, but in a very loose manner ("Kyrie", "Sanctus", "De Profundis"). These texts were written in the order in which they are presented, as far as I can recall.'[83] What is particularly interesting is the following: 'The basic idea was to compose a sequence of *ten* (my italics) texts'[84] The passion and death of Christ lie at the heart of the sequence, and these 'metaphysical' poems clearly contain what Glyn Pursglove terms 'a religious poetry of a thoroughly individual, non-institutional kind of the highest order' [85]

The epigraph, from Pierre Jean Jouve, referred to earlier in this chapter, was added *after* [my emphasis] writing the eight poems 'because of the echo they supplied' (*DGUI*, p.124):

> Le désespoir a des ailes
> L'amour a pour aile nacré
> Le désespoir
> Les sociétés peuvent changer. [86]

The choice of these lines and others in the collection, together with the translations, reflects, too, the depth of his empathy with Jouve. Referring to the epigraph, Merrikin-Hill points to 'the need to escape from the world into the territory of the spirit and the freedom (even dangerous freedom) in which the spirit belongs' (*BMHTM*, pp.279-80). He argues earlier in the essay that Gascoyne had learned from Berdyaev that 'freedom was the natural milieu or environment of the human spirit,' and that from Chestov and Berdyaev 'comes also the realization that in this freedom one faces the black holes in oneself, one's own devil, the Jungian shadow' (p.275).

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to the music for it; the Latin 'Ecce Homo' signifies 'Behold the man' in Pontius Pilate's words, and also refers to a picture or sculpture of Christ crowned with thorns.

[83] The first six poems from *Miserere* were set to music in 1972 by Bernard Naylor: for unaccompanied 'double mixed chorus and two soprano soloists' (Aylesbury, Bucks: Robertson Publications). Other poems in the sequence were translated into French by Gascoyne's friend and fellow poet, Yves de Bayser in *Poésie 84*, numéro 5 (novembre/décembre, 1984). De Bayser and David Kelley translated 'Ecce Homo' in *Two-fold Obsidiane*, numéro quatre (automne, 1982).

[84] My translation.

[85] Entry in *Contemporary Poets* V, ed. T. Chevalier (London & Chicago: St. James Press, 1991), p.331

[86] 'Despair has wings/ Love has mother of pearl for wings/ Societies can change/Despair'.

Gascoyne is aware that certain readers and critics have assumed that both the title and production of the poems that make up the 'dark, brooding' ((*PGDG*, p.144) *Miserere* [87] have been influenced by Georges Roualt's series of prints also known as "Miserere". This is not so, as he explained in a talk he gave in Piccadilly at the Royal Academy of Arts in 1983:

> Two other painters, however, probably did condition the imagery of at least two of the eight poems: the anonymous Provençal master responsible for that superb and unique work known as the *Pietà d'Avignon*, now in the Louvre, where the poem 'Pieta' is concerned; and the image of the Christ of Revolution and of Poetry that is evoked in 'Ecce Homo', the last poem in the sequence, was undoubtedly influenced by my having been presented in 1938 with a folder of black and white reproductions of the Isenheim Altarpiece of Grünewald, a work hitherto unknown to me.[88]

The reproductions of the triptych were given him shortly after his return from Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War in 1936 by Christian Zervos [chief editor of *Cahiers d'Art*], who had published them in his periodical. 'It is, above all, the central panel to which these texts refer,' [from left to right: the Incarnation of the Son of God; the Annunciation and the Resurrection, where the motif of the Open Tomb is visible; the triumph of the Ascension and of the suspension of bodily weight], Gascoyne told Michel Rémy (*DGUI*, p.124, my translation). The Altarpiece is a complex polyptych constructed on three levels: 'The Shrine', 'The Middle Position' to which Gascoyne refers, and 'The Closed Position'. In her illuminating study of the Isenheim Altarpiece in its monastic complex, Andrée Hayum has shown how the Antonite community that commissioned the intricate work was part of a hospital order dedicated to caring for the sick, and that this 'hospital context shaped a crucial aspect of the altarpiece's overall function.'[89]

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[87] The Paris publishing house, Granit, brought out a collection of French translations of Gascoyne's ***Poems 1937-42*** under the same title in 1989. The poet told Rémy that he didn't agree with their choice because it represents only one part of all the poems written over that six-year period.

[88] November 10th: 'Introductory Talk for Reading at Burlington House', pp.2/3 of an eight page A4 script typed on one side only. The subject of Gascoyne's lecture was the importance of painting in relation to his life and work. Further citings as (*DGRBH*).

[89] *The Isenheim Altarpiece. God's Medicine and the Painter's Vision* (Princeton University Press, 1989), p.17. Further citings as (*AHIA*). She argues that the sick would be the audience assembled routinely before the 'polyptych' and that 'confrontation and awareness are the states required of the individual viewer.' Hayum refers to Foucault's cultural histories of illness in general and madness in particular, in relation to the institutions for treating the sick and insane: hospitals and asylums (p.36).

At least ten years later, after the war, Gascoyne 'went with three young friends on a pilgrimage to Colmar in Alsace in order to see the great *retable* itself, glowing with colours which no reproduction could ever truly approximate' (*DGRBH*, p.3).

Using gouache, coloured chalks and inks, Sutherland's design in black, grey, red and white for the *Miserere* section seems suggestive, in Gascoyne's graphic description of it some forty-five years later, 'of an imaginary landscape as it might have appeared at the moment of the rending of the veil of the temple, over which floats a celestial orb with a sorrowful eye and streaming three trails reminiscent of those of the comet in the Bayeux tapestry, which may have been inspired by "the stricken sun" incapable of regeneration referred to in "Tenebrae" with which the sequence opens, or to the "netherworld/Dead sun" in "Ex Nihilo".'[90]

The suffering figure of Christ, Son of God, put to death by mankind, is the focus of 'Tenebrae' and the other seven poems in the sequence. Here Gascoyne employs flat, declarative statement with a measured, rhythmical intensity, like heartbeats, blood pounding in the ears: what Bergonzi terms 'emphatic aural patterning' (*WAA*, p.66). The opening words underscore the irrevocable nature of the act of crucifixion, and of its significance, emphasizing the speaker's sense of imminent apocalypse: it is 'the end of history' (*CJS*, pp.253-4), 'The Last Hour', the title given to the poem on its first publication:

> *It is finished.* The last nail
> Has consummated the inhuman pattern and its veil
> Is torn.

The very sun is 'stricken' by the appalling nature of humanity's crime, to the extent that there is no possibility of regeneration. 'Void yawns' and the open tomb is clearly visible. This first, nine-line stanza is predicated on a series of negatives signalling no more 'hope of faith', 'no more history'. Line eight, 'No height no depth no sign', suggests that the speaker and mankind are in limbo; the absence of commas denotes the rhythmic quality without pauses of the downward spiral. The speaker appropriates the authority and

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[90] 'PL Editions and Graham Sutherland' in *Tambimuttu: Bridge Between Two Worlds*, ed. Jane Williams (London: Peter Owen, 1989), p.113. Further citings as (*DGGS*).

solemnity of biblical utterance at the beginning of the last, three-line stanza, driven in his prophet-persona to bear witness to the truth of the human condition, the status of the Western world in 1939, and intones (with echoes of 'The worst is not,/So long as we can say, "This is the worst"' from *King Lear*):

> Thus may it be: and worse.
> And may we know Thy perfect darkness.
> And may we into Hell descend with Thee.

'He appeals not for release', as Perkins points out, 'but for a deeper descent with Christ into hell' (*HMP*, pp.181-2).[91] It is an acceptance of and a reaching out to the worst that can befall humankind. Stanford comments: 'So wrote David Gascoyne at the end of the 'thirties, and there have been no words quite like these uttered by an English poet since'. He continues, 'In Gascoyne's lines the voice is speaking for a community of penitents: it is near to the style of a public confession but the shock-absorbing formulae of church language is absent here: the contrition is naked. And the "we" here belongs rather to a sinning society at a time of crisis than to the average congregation being "mediated" through repentance to grace' (*ASI*, p.157). Terence Tiller, too, is struck by the 'naked' quality of Gascoyne's approach. Admitting, again, that 'resentment' on first reading, he argues that 'closer acquaintance does, however, reveal genuine depths, unusual intensity of feeling – a poem conceived in its own right, not derivatively.' He thinks that his resentment is rooted in the fact that this 'religious, despairing poem lies wide open, so to speak, with all four limbs'. It is as if he takes against an approach which displays 'no gesture or attitude of defence', simply 'an abandonment typical' of him, and 'of a kind not to be found between the greatest and the least of verse; but only at the extremes. First sight does not always recognize *which* extreme.' Tiller is continually reminded of Blake here and in other poems, 'both in this abandonment, and often in symbolism and imagery' (*TTG*, p.2).

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[91] The eponymous protagonist of Patrick McGrath's *Dr Haggard's Disease* mediates something of the zeitgeist at a particular historical moment in time, which seems to come close to expressing on one level at least what Gascoyne as an individual is trying to articulate here: '[...] for there had come, with the fall of France, and the knowledge that we now stood alone, a sense of exhilaration combined, curiously, with a desire, albeit oblique and perverse, for things to get worse, to get as bad as possible, until we were, as a people, staring directly into the abyss, so that *then* we might fight back - we seemed to need to have it confirmed that the situation was hopeless before the impulse of resistance could be properly aroused.' (Penguin Books, 1994), p.152.

This poem rejects both the day and the light of the other 'Tenebrae' with its antinomies in ***Hölderlin's Madness***, in favour of night and darkness. An illuminating 'metaphysical' journal entry for 5.III.40 (2.30 a.m.) captures poetically the zeitgeist as Gascoyne perceives it, and with its concern with the interface between life within and without, offers at the same time a meaningful context for a reading of this poem:

> *Tenebrae*
>
> - Night. 'The stars look down ...'
> - At midnight I went out of the lighted, blacked-out house, the room in which I had been writing beneath a lamp; and it was like entering another dimension, to step into the great motionless sea of darkness which lay outside. Like entering an exteriorization of the unwalled intimate dark space with which I am so familiar *within* myself. I looked up; and slowly the absolute blackness of the sky revealed itself, and the immensely stoic scintillation of the stars by which it was made manifest; and irresistibly I felt the outer and the inner night exchange themselves, so that the minute but immensely hard stars became as though one with all these tiny fires of painful joy – or of exultant pain? – innumerably nailed across that inner firmament of which the centre is my heart.
> - To stand alone and silent in the dark, and to look up into the sky's incomprehensible black wastes, is to realize the abandonment of one's situation *at the bottom of the universe*: in *ces bas-fonds du monde.* (*CJS*, p.292).

On the next page he quotes from a poem by Jean Wahl: 'Nous sommes au plus bas du monde sans pouvoir jamais remonter' ('We are at the lowest point in the universe, unable to climb back up'). As Michael Schmidt puts it, Gascoyne evokes in the *Miserere* poems 'the terror of being without God' (*MSI*, p.287).[92]

Bernard Bergonzi sees Gascoyne's approach in the *Miserere* series to be 'that of a poetic mythologizer rather than an orthodox believer',[93] and it seems to me that there is a strong, and understandable, parallel here (given the dates of composition and first publication of some of these poems) with the controlling sensibility and the diction and imagery of the original verses interpolated in ***Hölderlin's Madness***. The supremely suffering Orpheus-Hölderlin-Gascoyne protagonist in that collection as I have presented him, is replaced in *Miserere*, as Robin Skelton suggests, by 'the figure of the solitary

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[92] Elizabeth Jennings writes in a similar vein: 'The poet, in lines of extreme lucidity, examines the depths of man's guilt and the terror of life without God' (*EJROS*, p.191).

[93] Entry on DG in *Contemporary Poets of the English Language*, ed. Rosalie Murphy (London & Chicago: St. James Press, 1970), p.407. Further citings as (*BBCP*).

sufferer and visionary [who] takes on the lineaments of Christ'.[94] Duclos put it to Gascoyne that 'Christ is the Poet and the Poet is crucified like Christ?' (my translation), to which he replied, 'You could say that' (*MDI*, p.51). Schmidt asserts that 'Gascoyne is swallowed by Christ, becomes Him' (*MSI*, ibid.).

Turning to 'Pieta', the reader is struck at once by the sheer visuality of the poem which was inspired by a visit Gascoyne made to the Louvre on 31st October 1938 and his vivid and acute response to a version of the *Pietà*, 'that amazing French primitive of the Avignon school [...], with golden sky, strong reds and blues: the Christ-body arched poignantly backwards across the knees of the Madonna, whose features are stretched on an angular frame of grief, the halo like a jagged golden crown radiating sharply from the stiff, unseeing holy face.' Gascoyne finds that this work belonging to the Southern French tradition is the nearest approach he has seen 'to the intense Gothic emotion of Grünewald' (*CJS*, p.200).

The opening five-line stanza presents a vision of kneeling 'Saints abandoned' against the backdrop of a suffering land:

> Stark in the pasture on the skull-shaped hill,
> In swollen aura of disaster shrunken and
> Unsheltered by the ruin of the sky.

I am reminded of a variant line in Bernard Spencer's poem 'Castille': 'a landscape shaped like pain',[95] and of the 'agonizing' landscape in stanza six of 'Figure in a Landscape' in ***Hölderlin's Madness***. Here, in 'Pieta', the grief of the Virgin, and that of the speaker and of mankind are transferred to the tortured land with the reference to Golgotha, both Calvary and skull. The charged language is intensely felt, yet, as Bergonzi points out, it is 'at the same time highly controlled'. The central stanza of seven lines reveals here, as in other poems in the sequence, Gascoyne's 'deep interest in the central symbols of Christianity' (*BBCP*, p.407). The chill of 'the rigid folds/Of a blue cloak' (cf. the 'cold curtains of rock', 'the rigid draperies' and 'the blue robes of a king' in 'Orpheus in the Underworld'), together with the rawness of the deliberately shocking choice of an ugly

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[94] Introduction to *David Gascoyne: Collected Poems* (Oxford University Press, 1965), p.xiii. Further citings as (*RSDG*).

[95] *Bernard Spencer: Collected Poems*, edited by Roger Bowen (Oxford University Press, 1981), p.144.

word in the description of the Virgin with 'Her grief-*scrawled* face for the ensuing world to read', are tempered by the speaker's sensitivity to the pity of the 'dear' head's weight 'like a blood-incrusted stone' so tenderly cradled on the 'unfathomable' maternal breast. Gavin Ewart comments: 'Actual beauty in the classical sense, occurs for the first time in a Gascoyne poem' (*GEVFD*, p.90). Stanford quotes these three lines (10-12) as examples of a 'higher-tension type of imagery', drawing from Coleridge.[96] Pierre Jean Jouve's Virgin in his poem 'Pietà', translated by Gascoyne, is addressed directly:

> [...] closely to you do you hold
> His dying body on the brink of madness.
> Hold him to you close. To see him still means ah!
> What rending shreds
> Of sacred horror binding your softness round with love.

In the third and final three-line stanza of Gascoyne's poem, the Virgin with the dead Christ across her lap waits 'Till the catharsis of the race shall be complete'. The experience of sin is seen as a necessary dynamic process of exorcism by which man can achieve deliverance through what Gascoyne terms in 'Ex Nihilo' 'the revelation of despair'. Jennings refers to the 'tough, lithe quality of David Gascoyne's language and imagery' in this poem, appreciating 'the skill [...] with which [he] has involved the whole of mankind in the act of redemption and, in an entirely concrete way, has tethered past and future to the present moment' (*EJROS*, pp.191-2).

'De Profundis', third poem in the sequence, seems to begin where 'Tenebrae' ends: 'And may we into Hell descend with thee', though the prose extract I quoted presents the diarist looking up 'into the sky's impenetrable black wastes'. In 'De Profundis' 'an/Intense glare is on our faces *facing down* (my emphasis)'. Footsteps 'Wander in the *marsh* of death' and the depths are falsely lit by 'death's/*Marsh-light*' [my emphasis]: mankind without faith[97] is lost in the universe from which God is absent. There is a reversal here of Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, 'The Little Boy Lost' and 'The Little Boy Found' where the child, lost on the outskirts of the city, led astray by the marsh-light or willow-the-wisp, is saved by God the Father who appears to him and leads

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[96] He is referring to Coleridge's comment on the symbolic image: 'a figure whose nature,' writes Stanford, 'is understood [...] as something existing in itself and deriving from something greater than that which it represents.' 'The Unity of David Gascoyne', in *Poetry Quarterly*, Vol.10, No.4 (winter 1948), pp.253-4.

[97] The later work, *Night Thoughts*, reflects what Gascoyne calls 'the arid bankruptcy of unbelief' in 'The Poet and the City' in (*DGSP*), pp.127-8.

him by the hand back to his tearful mother. In 'De Profundis' man is unable to articulate meaningfully, silenced by a tongue turned to stone, and a mind that 'has been struck blind'. The speaker, taking upon himself the sins of the world, acknowledges the abandonment of our terrifying situation 'at the bottom of the universe'. It is significant that while the lines are measured, there are no dramatic hammer blows to point up the hopelessness of the human condition: the language here is characterized by what Schmidt calls Gascoyne's 'compelling gentleness' and 'the humanity of his tone' which is 'his hallmark'.[98] His religion 'is always social and personal' (*MSI*, pp.288, 289). Again, as in 'Tenebrae', there is a naked urgency in the poet's plea for the worst that mankind can confront: 'Deepen our depths,/ And aid our unbelief'.

'Kyrie', the fourth poem, is a sonnet, with three quatrains and a rhyming couplet. It takes the form of a prayer, 'Lord have pity' from 'Kyrie eleison'. The development of the poem is carefully controlled, and a series of substantives and active verbs denoting cruel aggression: 'destructive' (line 1), 'blow' (2), 'shatters' (2), 'thrust' (3), 'lay waste' (4), is counterpointed by a succession of abstract nouns of suffering: 'grief' (2), 'pain' (3), 'fear' (6), 'guilt' (9), 'anguish' (10). These last, in turn, are offset by 'hope' (9) and 'grace' (12). It is interesting that the first line of the poem on its first appearance in *Partisan Review* (fall 1938), reads: 'Is man's old lust *to war* insatiable?' (emphasis added). In its final form, the speaker accuses mankind of '[self-]destructive lust', of a 'fatality of guilt', and suggests a Freudian explanation: 'The black catastrophe that can lay waste our worlds/May be unconsciously desired'. However, there is an acknowledgement of the possibility of hope for man, a genuine faith in ultimate victory:

> Grant us extraordinary grace,
>
> O spirit hidden in the dark in us and deep,
> And bring to light the dream out of our sleep.

Gascoyne's preoccupation, like Jouve's, is with the 'difficulty of transcending man's state of sin, guilt and despair'.[99]

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[98] 'What is notable here is the complete lack of self-pity,' comments Jennings (*EJROS*, p.192).

[99] William Rees, introduction to his Jouve selection in *The Penguin Book of French Poetry 1820-1950* (Penguin, 1992), p.660.

Fifth in the series, the sixteen-line poem 'Lachrymae' examines the two thousand years of history since the crucifixion of Christ, and man's unwillingness, his present inability, to come to a genuine awareness of the sacrifice God made: lines 1-10 accentuate 'the lengths of time' that have elapsed since His Son was crucified on Calvary. 'Fires of unnumbered stars/Have burnt the years away, until *we see them* now' (my emphasis). Given the title, it is appropriate that there is a consistent word-play throughout the poem on the eye, tears and weeping, seeing and blindness: 'the slow weight of tears' (line 5), 'Since Thou didst weep' (6, 9), 'our secret face/Is blind (12-13), 'the mysterious/Surging of tears' (14), 'Thy tears which fall' (16). There is a particularly effective simile in lines 9-10: 'as many tears/Have flowed like hourglass sand'. Line 11 is short and comprises four emphatic syllables: 'Thy tears were all': here is that 'blunt [...] interior music' to which Gascoyne referred (quoted earlier in this chapter).[100] Throughout 'Lachrymae', lines of awkward varying length with the ensuing lack of symmetry on the page, underline the intensity of feeling and the pain experienced by the speaker who addresses God in his Poet-Christ persona.

In the last five-line section of the poem, the constant battle with evil is set squarely in the present 'when our secret face/Is blind because of the mysterious/Surging of tears' provoked by 'our most profound/Presentiment of evil in man's fate' (lines 13-15); and the religious and political come together as the speaker acknowledges the inevitability of a catastrophic war. He sees God's tears falling for mankind so that there is a reversal: 'our cruellest wounds/Become *Thy* stigmata' (my italics). Flesh and spirit are indissolubly joined.

As I pointed out earlier in this chapter, two paragraphs in the letter Gascoyne wrote to Benjamin Fondane in July 1937 are particularly relevant to any reading of the sixth part of *Miserere*, 'Ex Nihilo'.[101] He is at pains to examine the relationship between the writer and the work of art, between poetry and creation. Two years later, 22.VIII.39, Gascoyne wrote in his journal:

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[100] Jennings: 'In "Lachrymae", David Gascoyne affirms *through* tears; tears are a purgation and also a gift because they are man's tears mingled with Christ's' (*EJROS*, p.192).

[101] See notebook draft in **Appendix 2F.**

> To be able to get Beyond, and to able to express what I more than half *know* already, it is necessary to *find a centre* (*point de repère*). Suppose this centre were to appear later as 'God' (creation of a new projection of the essential self: Religion of the Future: solitary individual process of creating an objective (superstructure) out of the subjective. *Creatio ex Nihilo*. Rilke's idea of the purpose of mankind on earth being slowly to *create* 'God' (His transcendentally objective existence) (*CJS*, p.255).

The poem itself, in three five-line stanzas, seems to develop as a progression from the ending of 'De Profundis': 'Deepen our depths/And aid our unbelief'. Here, the speaker accepts what Jean Wahl terms 'cet abandon au fond de l'univers' ('this desertion at the bottom of the universe')[102] :

> Here am I now cast down
> Beneath the black glare of a netherworld's
> Dead suns.

I have already quoted a sentence from Gascoyne's essay on Chestov published some six years after the appearance of ***Poems 1937-42***, and his words seem particularly apposite in the context of any discussion of the *Miserere* sequence and specifically of 'Ex Nihilo': 'To have real faith in God is not at present in general natural to man in the world'. Gascoyne emerges through this series of poems as a cartographer of man's spiritual crisis, his primary concern, while engaging at the same time with the severe crisis provoked by the ineluctable fact that the world was at war; on the very day that Auden was sitting in the Fifty-Second Street 'dive' composing his poem 'September 1, 1939',[103] he had

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[102] Quoted by Gascoyne in his journal, 5.III.40 (*CJS*), p.293.

[103] There are a number of points of contact between Gascoyne and W.H. Auden at this time towards the end of the thirties. Both had been drawn to Marxism (but only Gascoyne actually joined the BCP for a brief period), and both went to Spain during the Civil War as non-combatants. Auden had acknowledged in 1936 in a review in *New Verse*, 'Honest Doubt': 'my only knowledge of Surrealism is derived from Mr. Gascoyne's books, a few French writers like Breton and Aragon, some paintings of Dalí, Ernst and others [...]'. Gascoyne had been quick to praise the older poet in his response to the *New Verse* questionnaire, 'Sixteen Comments on Auden' (double number 26-27) in November 1937. They met for the first time in Paris in November 1938 at a moment when each had reached a critical moment in his psychological, philosophical and creative development. Both were immersed in Pascal and Kierkegaard. As Auden was writing *The Prolific and the Devourer*, a collection of personal aphorisms and reflections (in spring/summer 1939, then abandoned in the Autumn), Gascoyne was developing in a notebook he called *Blind Man's Buff*, 'the living germ of a philosophy corresponding to the needs of our time' as he wrote in September 1939, looking to synthesize the principles of 'the spiritual revolution'. He had already referred to 'a notebook of *pensées*' in a letter to Fondane in 1937: Pascal had provided him with the model. Auden wrote to Mrs Dodds in August 1939: 'I've been hard at work at my *pensées* and so have not had time to write poetry'. His emigration to the USA coincided with a radical re-examination of his perception of Christianity throughout the previous decade; Gascoyne, however, who had to return to England from Paris because war was imminent, did not undergo a religious conversion but a change in his poetic sensibility having rejected Surrealism and discovered Jouve. In effect, the poetic language

articulated his despair in apocalyptic terms: 'but to witness the irredeemably tragic spectacle of mankind rushing blindly and incoherently, like the Gadarene swine, into a sea of horror and obliteration' (*CJS*, p.261). However, his concern extends to the future, too, and 'the coming spiritual revolution' (*CJS*, pp.253-4).

Sent to the abyss by 'a lofty hand,/Hand that I love', by 'Thy ruler's finger', the iron command of 'Lord Light' (contrasting with the darkness of 'thy arm's will'), the speaker in 'Ex Nihilo' is grateful for consignment to the depths where he recognizes that he 'must learn/The revelation of despair', searching for and finding

> Among the debris of all certainties
> The hardest stone on which to found
> Altar and shelter for Eternity.

Gascoyne builds on Fondane's notion that the abyss may have something significant to say, and points to the possibility of creating a new spiritual reality 'out of nothing': through 'the negation of despair' mankind can grow to an awareness of the need to develop protection (in the form of a spiritual armour) against the destructive powers.

'Sanctus' comprises two stanzas of eleven and seven lines each. The religious and metaphysical thrust of the poem follows the trajectory of the previous six, but for the first time in this sequence, (perhaps because all the evidence suggests that 'Sanctus' was written last in 1941 or 1942), Gascoyne employs imagery which is different though nevertheless in keeping with the ideas and tone of the others.[104] The speaker addresses God directly as 'Master', acknowledging the incomprehensible quality of His mystery and that of the fate of mankind linked to 'long promised/Revelation!' Gascoyne portrays a gentler, less rugged and awesome landscape:

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employed by each was to change. In addition, Auden had consulted a Freudian psychiatrist at 22, and Gascoyne had been in analysis with Blanche Reverchon Jouve at the same age. Both had been taking benzedrine: Auden continued to do so for another 20 years, while Gascoyne's health and creative output were to suffer from his amphetamine abuse in the forties.

[104] Elizabeth Jennings's response to this poem is interesting and it differs from mine in that she sees Sanctus' to be 'the heart of the sequence'. For her, 'the word "altar" is the key to the [...] poem. '[...] though it never refers directly to the Mass or the Consecration, it is a vivid evocation of what the consecration means and whence it moves' (op.cit.,p.193).

Murmur of the leaves
Of life's prolific tree in the dark haze
Of midsummer:

This metaphorical life force is beating in the 'inspiration of the blood/In the ecstatic secret bed' (with its Blakean echoes). His use of the colon in each of lines 6, 7 and 9 is unusual, and he employs caesuras in lines 4, 11, 12 and 18: the force of these is to emphasize the controlled nature of the development of the argument.

What follows is an image that has no counterpart in *Miserere* as he moves from the exterior world to a view from inside a prison with a 'bare inscription' on one of the walls: 'For thou shalt persevere/In thine identity ...' This affords a momentary vision of 'Escape into the golden dance of dust/Beyond the window': escape into the region of the spirit and the freedom wherein the spirit dwells. The body is a prison, in the prison of this world, and the 'golden dance' represents the light, the 'long promised/Revelation'. The first stanza ends with the three long, emphatic beats of 'These are all.'

The second stanza represents a fusion of the private and the public, the personal and the political. 'Incomprehensible' (line 1) becomes 'Uncomprehending' (line 12), but the speaker embraces the belief that to understand

Is to endure, withstand the withering blight
Of winternight's long desperation, war,
Confusion

Man's ability to endure in the face of the coldness of solitude, the bitterness of despair and the horror of war, leads to the understanding that

all the spirit's force
Becomes acceptance of the blind eyes
To see no more.

We must first be blind in order to see with such a purity of vision that everything the eye lights on is sanctified (as in Blake's 'For everything that lives is holy').

David Perkins claims that 'blind' here means 'see[ing] only night', and that the final line, 'And all they see their vision sanctifies', represents a 'promise' or rather a

'guess [...] necessarily vague and ambiguous, for he [Gascoyne] cannot say what lies beyond despair, or even that anything does.' Perkins continues: 'He writes as one in a windowless dungeon, knowing only the dark and the wall, yet surmising that there may be something outside' (*HMP*, p.181). Perkins is commenting here on 'Sanctus', but I'm not convinced by his reading which stresses a perceived vagueness on Gascoyne's part, crucially failing to take into consideration the strength of his faith and of his burning desire for spiritual certainty; or his own *courage* in facing up to the very worst that life can offer in his search for transcendence: 'Courage which is the antithesis of the underlying fear to be discovered in everything which is most disgusting in the modern world: courage to build one's life on the foundation of despair'.[105]

Throughout the *Miserere* sequence Gascoyne is conducting his own intense dialogue with God, but without the emotional violence that attends John Donne's impassioned pleas in a Holy Sonnet like 'Batter My Heart'; though both poets, centuries apart are, however, deeply aware of their own sense of sin and of guilt. In Gascoyne, emotion is subdued, expressed in a muted manner, but it is through the diction employed; no restraint is imposed by the form which is not rigid.

'Ecce Homo' was 'the result of having been impressed by the central figure,' writes Gascoyne (*DGICP*, p.xviii). He is referring here to the 'Closed State' or 'Closed Position' of the altarpiece which comprises four panels: from left to right, Saint Sebastian, Crucifixion (centre), Lamentation (below it), Anthony. The crucified Christ in the central panel is flanked on the viewer's right by the 'excessively isolated figure' of Saint John (*AHIA*, p.37) and on the left by the figure of Mary Magdalene who is 'contorted with grief'.[106]

The complex visual nature of the Altarpiece and its iconography, together with its religious and cultural significance, inscribe Grünewald's work with multiple layers of meaning, and it is not difficult to understand why so many famous writers and artists,

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[105] Gascoyne quoted by W.S. Milne in 'Knocking Down Barriers', his review of Gascoyne's *Selected Poems* in *Agenda*, Vol.31, No.1 (summer 1999), p.79.

[106] John Golding, 'Picasso and Surrealism' in *Visions of the Modern* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), p.217. Future citings as (*JGVM*).

such as Walter Benjamin, Max Beckmann, Picasso, Francis Bacon and Gascoyne himself, have been inspired by it. Clearly there is a tension, an ongoing dialectic in the triptych still particularly meaningful today: here is an enduring example of the apogee of human artistic creativity set against the tragic sense of the excesses of human nature and of mankind in the midst of war.

In her discussion of the Isenheim *Crucifixion* and *Lamentation*, Andrée Hayum argues that the former 'presents death in its imminence' and that the 'gaunt and blemished hanging Christ' is modelled in part on a late medieval carved crucifix. The figures are presented in silhouette against the night sky and 'appear as large as life'. The point she is making is an important one: 'they are expressive participants in a real-life drama, intended as an organizing focus for a large assembly of viewers' (*AHIA*, p.37).[107]

Picasso's admiration for Grünewald's Altarpiece produced a series of variations on the *Crucifixion* in 1932, preceded by his own *Crucifixion* of 1930 with his typical distortions of the human form. The difference in the approaches of Gascoyne and Picasso, whom he met in the middle of that decade, are to be found in John Golding's comment on a work which he considers to be a product of Surrealism: '[the *Crucifixion*] is deeply irreligious in spirit and it evokes the sensation of some primitive atavistic ritual, cruel and compulsive', draining a traditional theme 'of its religious connotations and [imbuing] it with a quality of primeval brutality and darkness' (*JGVM*, pp. 242, 243).

In his essay, 'Myth and Education' (1976), Ted Hughes turns his attention to a particular Christian story; his comments are peculiarly relevant to a consideration of Gascoyne's poem 'Ecce Homo':

> To follow the meanings behind the one word Crucifixion would take us through most of European history, and much of Roman and Middle Eastern too. It would take us into every corner of our private life. And before long it would compel us to acknowledge much more important meanings than merely informative ones. Openings of spiritual experience, a dedication to final realities which might well stop us dead in our tracks [...].[108]

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[107] She makes it clear that the Antonite community that commissioned the Altarpiece was part of a hospital order, so that this context 'shaped a crucial aspect of the altarpiece's overall function' (op.cit. p.17).

[108] Quoted by Kathleen Raine in her review of Ted Hughes's *Winter Pollen*, in *Agenda*, Vol.31, No.4-Vol.32, No.1 (winter-spring 1994), p.326.

The first of Gascoyne's twelve six-line stanzas focuses on the physicality of Grünewald's tortured Christ: 'Whose is this horrifying face?' he asks, sparing us nothing in the description of appalling suffering:

> This putrid flesh, discoloured, flayed,
> Fed on by flies, scorched by the sun?
> Whose are these hollow red-filmed eyes
> And thorn-spiked head and spear-struck side?[109]

In Bergonzi's view, 'The idea of crucifixion and the physical image of the wounded Christ on the cross became a common emblem for human suffering in wartime poetry.' Gascoyne's *Miserere* poems, he states, 'particularly the last of them, "Ecce Homo", make a powerful and sustained use of such imagery.' He points to Dylan Thomas's sonnet, 'This was the crucifixion on the mountain',[110] and argues perceptively that 'the crucifixion was as common a motif [in 1940s poetry] as the frontier had been for the poets of the 1930s' (*WAA*, p.70).

But it was not just the poets of that decade who responded to the zeitgeist by focusing on the figure of the Crucified Christ. Dawn Ades considers that over the last hundred years both writers and artists have 'gone back to the image of the Crucifixion [...] for reasons that are extra-religious and in a non-Christian context. It has been used,' she continues, 'to express spiritual or transcendental attitudes, or, as in the case of Picasso, pain or anguish.'[111]

Francis Bacon's work, *Three Studies for Figures at the base of a Crucifixion* of 1944, [112] the same year as the publication of ***Poems 1937-42***, [113] was influenced, as the

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[109] In Raine's poem of the same name (1945), the tone is altogether more tender, more serene, as can be seen in the following stanza: 'Those eyes that opened on our earth at Bethlehem/Were all the world's young eyes; the eyes of birds,/Wild creatures' eyes that know earth's secret places,/[...]/Our child-hood's innocent eyes, all human eyes/That weep and wonder, watch, and suffer and surmise'.

[110] Sonnet VIII. First published in May 1936 in *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*, No.1, p.2. Gascoyne contributed a poem, 'Competition', p.5.

[111] 'Web of Images' in *Francis Bacon*, (eds.) Ades and Andrew Forge (London: Thames & Hudson, 1980), p.19. Further citings as (*DAFB*).

[112] Bacon's *Crucifixion*, painted in the early 30s, was reproduced in Herbert Read's *Art Now* (1933), a copy of which Gascoyne took with him on his first visit to Paris that year.

[113] As Stephen Spender pointed out in a review, 'Lessons of Poetry 1943', in *Horizon*, Vol.1X, No.51 (March 1944), pp.211-12: ' (the volume did not appear till January 1944, but it is dated on the title page as 1943).'

artist told David Sylvester, 'by the Picasso things which were done at the end of the 'twenties' In 1962, he was drawn to produce another triptych: *Three Studies for a Crucifixion*. Again, like Picasso, the impulse to choose the theme differs from Gascoyne's as Bacon's comments to Sylvester make clear: 'I know for religious people, for Christians, the Crucifixion has a totally different significance. But as a non-believer, it was just an act of man's behaviour, a way of behaviour to another.'[114]

Bacon 'paints the "History" of a primal world in which faith has been lost,' writes George Gilpin. He suggests that the artist 'depicted the destruction of London [the blitz] as scenes related to a crucifixion.' [115] Both Gilpin and Ades cite Bacon's description to Sylvester of the figures at the base of the Cross as Eumenides, relating his work 'at least since the 1944 triptych to Greek tragedy' (*DAFB*, p.19). Gilpin goes further, arguing that these figures could equally well 'represent victims of the violence of world war, who, like those who witnessed the punishment of Christ, have lost all hope and are reduced to nothing but downtrodden meekness, blind voraciousness, and howling despair. Salvation is out of the question in the face of such depravity' (*GACEC*, p.39).

The physicality of the forms in Bacon's versions of the Crucifixion chimes with that of the Christ figure in Gascoyne's 'Ecce Homo' [116], and in Jouve's *Vrai Corps* where 'sur le flance la lèvre s'ouvre en méditant/Lèvre de la plaie mâle' ('The lip opens meditating on the flank/The lip of the male wound'). Nevertheless, the latter's poem opens: 'Salut Resplendissant/Corps de la chair engagé par la tombe' ('Hail Resplendent/Body of flesh bound by the tomb') which represents the reverse of Gascoyne's tormented Christ where the human element is stressed. However, Jouve is striving, like Gascoyne, to show the relationship between the spirit and the flesh.

Darkness is at the core of Gascoyne's poem and the only colours in a severely limited palette are, appropriately, red and black: 'red-filmed eyes' (line 4); 'black shirts'

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[114] David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*, 3rd enlarged edition (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987, 1990), p.8.

[115] Gilpin: 'Prisoners of War' in *The Art of Contemporary English Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1991), p.39. Further citings as (*GACEC*).

[116] In 'Study for Portrait II – after the Life Mask of William Blake', Bacon's dark, flayed face of the poet is more concerned to examine what lies beneath the skin: the self and the spirit within, and the attendant pain of existence.

(21); the sky 'Glares like a fiery cataract' and is 'red with the murders of two thousand years' (33); 'the black priest' (62). Visuality is all in the appeal to our inner eye, the speaker is driven to bear witness to the true nature of the human condition, to *make us see*. The veil must be torn, there must be no more disguise, the 'bitter truth' explored and revealed: 'He [Christ] is in agony till the world's end' (12). Gascoyne told Rémy that 'The majority of readers [of *Miserere*] don't realize that line 13, "And we must never sleep during that time", is a direct quotation from Pascal, number 553 precisely of the *Pensées*, about the Mystery of Jesus' (*DGUI*, p.124).

As readers of 'Ecce Homo' we take the place of 'the large assembly of viewers' (Hayum) before the Isenheim *Crucifixion*, because as Gascoyne takes us into the centre of the poem with the line 'And we are onlookers at the crime', we realize that there is a voyeuristic sense of being implicated as human beings in the horror of Christ's suffering; that we continue to kill him again and again: 'He hangs and suffers still' (line 19). The inference here is clear: nothing has changed in two thousand years, mankind has learned nothing. In the midst of his own spiritual crisis, Gascoyne is speaking for the whole human race and its guilt, at a crucial moment in history. And like the artist Francis Bacon, he has come to identify the crucifixion of Christ with the tortured being that is twentieth-century man. The Crucifixion is being re-enacted once more, as it has been since the first Calvary,[117] so that its relevance and significance for the second year of the war, 1940, after the fall of France, is underscored by the figures of the centurions who are transmogrified into fascists: the Gestapo/Nazi soldiers with their riding boots, black shirts and peaked caps: 'They have cold eyes, unsmiling lips' (21,23).[118] The two criminals crucified with Christ may now be

> A labourer and a factory hand,
> Or one is maybe a lynched Jew

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[117] Gascoyne would write in *The Sun at Midnight*, his book of aphorisms (Enitharmon Press, 1970), as follows: '26. *The Momentous Discovery*. God has been dead in man./The Saviour has been dead in God after man's historical repetition of his betrayal, rejection and murder./The Lord of all Being has come to the moment of His resurrection in all true human beings./He is what he was./He was the Saviour that He is./He shall be ever the Holy returned dove, the revenant Ghost of Himself [...]'. Further citings as (*DGSAM*).

[118] Neville Braybrooke writes: 'The Crucifixion he [Gascoyne] sees as the event which can redeem man from his "sterile misery": time is telescoped, and the Roman centurions are also Mussolini's blackshirts'. 'The poet as seer', a review of *Selected Poems* (Enitharmon Press), in *The Tablet* (11 Feb. 1995). Further citings as (*NBPS*).

> And one a Negro or a Red,
> Coolie or Ethiopian, Irishman,
> Spaniard or German democrat. (26-30)

The visuality of a painted scene is emphatic in stanza seven, making us aware again of Grünewald's *Crucifixion*, but the poem's is a contemporary landscape of 'drifting sands' and 'clefted landslides' (40/41), and the speaker's anxiety is patent as he points to 'our about-to-be/Bombed and abandoned cities' (42).[119] The impression of apocalypse, noted in 'Tenebrae' is strongly present at this point:

> He who wept for Jerusalem
> Now sees His prophecy extend
> Across the greatest cities of the world,
> A guilty panic reason cannot stem
> Rising to raze them all as He foretold;
> And he must watch this drama to the end.

The irrevocability of the nature of the crime, of 'Tenebrae's 'inhuman pattern', has coloured the entire poem to this point, emphasized in lines 52-4: 'And each man bears the common guilt alone/And goes blindfolded to his fate,/And fear and greed are sovereign lords'. This is one of the most significant stanzas in 'Ecce Homo where the stance adopted by Gascoyne accords with the definition of poetry expressed by one of his friends of many years, Yves Bonnefoy, and paraphrased here by Michael Sheringham: '[it is] an act directed at what he called "la présence", an engagement with the here and now of lived experience in the real world'.[120] In Gascoyne's line, 'The turning point in history' (55) there is, too, an echo of Yeats's theory of the gyres in his poem 'The Second Coming' operating in a two-thousand-year cycle.

However, in stanza ten, Gascoyne now strikes a provisional note of hope dependent upon 'may' and the subjunctive mood where there is no confident assertion: 'Yet the complacent and the proud/And who exploit and kill, *may* be denied' (56-57, emphasis added). He continues, in the penultimate stanza: 'The black priest and the upright man/Faced by subversive truth shall be struck dumb' (62-63) for it is 'the rejected

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[119] The line brings with it the visual resonance of three of Max Ernst's prophetic paintings of the destruction that would be suffered by several major cities in Europe at the end of the thirties: *The Entire City* (1933), *Petrified City* (1933), *The Entire City* (1934).

[120] Entry on Yves Bonnefoy in *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*, edited by Robert France (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p.102.

and condemned' who [may] 'become/Agents of the divine' (65-66). The 'sterile misery' (69) of mankind may yet be redeemed by 'the tree of human pain' (68). It is held in the balance.

In each of the final three stanzas he directly addresses the 'Christ of Revolution and of Poetry', a line which has developed a particular resonance since the first publication of the poem, but which also contributed to his expulsion by Breton from the Surrealist Group after the war when he returned to Paris.[121] It is possible that the arresting and resonant phrase, 'Christ of Revolution', may derive, unconsciously, from a reading some years earlier of Blaise Cendrars's *Prose du Transiberien et de la petite Jeanne de France* and of the lines, 'Je pressentais la venue du grand Christ rouge de la révolution russe .../Et le soleil était une mauvaise plaie/Qui s'ouvrait comme un brasier'.[122] However, Jouve may have provided the inspiration for the 'Christ of Revolution and of Poetry'. He employs two main figures, 'Christ-Apollo, the "Christ of Poetry", and Mnemosyne, goddess of memory and mother of the Muses [to represent] two divergent paths of poetic creation'.[123] Adrian Caesar comments, 'When Gascoyne calls upon the "Christ of Revolution and of Poetry" to guide "us" in our "long journey through the night", we nevertheless are obliged to recognize the distance between such a vision and any left-wing politics' (*DLS*, p.186).

Rhyme is employed in each of the twelve stanzas, but there is not a consistent scheme. More than half of the stanzas include one pair of masculine rhymes, while in each of stanzas two and eight, - and in three, six and nine where there is partial rhyme -,

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[121] Gascoyne records how, revisiting 'the Surrealist group's Montmartre meeting-place, I found myself facing a severe Breton at the head of the communal café table: "I am told that you have become not only a Communist" (meaning Stalinist rather than Trotskyite) "but a Catholic", he announced to me in his iciest manner' (*CJS*, p.393). On p.395 Gascoyne refers to 'the refusal of Breton and his followers to realize that a recognition of the all-important power of love, combining Eros and Agape, is inseparable from the discovery of the philosopher's stone, the corner-stone of a truly human society'.

[122] 'I could sense the coming of the great red Christ of the Russian Revolution ... And the sun was a vicious open wound blazing like live coals'. Quoted from *The Penguin Book of French Poetry, 1820-1950*, selected, translated and introduced by William Rees (Penguin Books, 1992), p.575.

[123] Daniel E. Rivas, 'Pierre Jean Jouve' in *Encyclopedia of Literature in the World*, Vol.2, E-K (London & Chicago: St. James Press, 1999), p.571. Further citings as (*DERJ*).

there are two sets of lines with masculine endings, with a sole exception.[124] This lack of symmetry underlines the instability, the precarious nature of our existence on the edge.[125]

Once again, the reader cannot fail to be aware of the charged language in 'Ecce Homo', the longest at seventy-two lines and the final poem of the sequence to which it provides 'a kind of coda' (*EJROS*, p.193), nor of the intensity of feeling[126] and the unquestionable sincerity of the speaker whose identification with the Christ figure is linked to the zeitgeist.[127] It is ironic that, writing in 1980 in the preface to Fondane's *Le Mal des fântomes* [the collected poems] on the poetry written shortly before the second World War, Gascoyne should, in effect, describe his own verse, dating from that period, not least *Miserere.* It is, he comments, 'a poetry of cries, of suffering and of often despairing or ironically bitter songs, full of obsessions and fears'.[128] John Press considers ***Poems 1937-42***, like ***A Vagrant***, to be 'metaphysical and religious explorations of man's nature and destiny.' Gascoyne's universe 'is one of anguish, guilt, and terror, a place where man, tormented by desire and by the horror of Nothingness, turns for salvation to the "Christ of Revolution and of Poetry" (or to some other powerful myth) in an endeavour to gain certainty and release'.[129] Neville Braybrooke indicates 'recurring references to the Resurrection, which, as the Last Judgement, will make everyone a contemporary' (*NBPS*). Stanford comments: 'The poet has had a vision of the void, but still preserved his sense of verbal balance' (*DSPQ*, p.124). Gavin Ewart, on the other hand, while acknowledging that *Miserere* is 'a fine sequence', claims that its only fault is that 'it sometimes reads like a fifth *Quartet*' (*GEVFD*, p.91).[130]

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[124] The only example of feminine rhyme occurs in stanza 2: 'devised' – 'disguised', lines 2 and 5.

[125] Ewart comments: 'Rhyme, used throughout for the first time, holds each stanza together' (*GEVFD*, p.91).

[126] On 23.1.39, he reports that he has been reading Isherwood's *Lion and Shadows*, and it is clear that while Gascoyne himself is consciously striving to mediate the intensity of his feelings, his inner turmoil, he finds this vital quality lacking in the other writer, and it matters: 'The most serious criticism one can make of him seems to me to be that he has evaded a certain very important plane of reality (difficult to define, - perhaps I mean the plane of "intensity" – the plane dealt with by Julien Green, for instance, or by Jouhandeau – the plane of the sombre and the strange)' (*CJS*, p.143).

[127] According to Gavin Ewart, 'Mr Gascoyne's Christ needless perhaps to say, is Blake's Christ' (*GEVFD*, p.91).

[128] Translated from the French by Roger Scott with Catherine McFarlane (*DGSP*, p.177).

[129] *A Map of Modern English Verse* (Oxford University Press, 1969, 1971), pp.233-4.

[130] I have already pointed to the influence on the very early Gascoyne of T.S. Eliot, and it is clearly marked, too, in the mature work for the BBC Third Programme, ***Night Thoughts***, as I have indicated in my paper, 'David Gascoyne's *Night Thoughts*: "The Infernal Megalometropolis"', published in *Lecture(s) de la Ville/The City as Text*, ed. Gilbert Bonifas (Faculté des Lettres de Nice, University of Nice, France, July 2000), pp.51-63, and subsequently in *Temenos Academy Review* (spring 2001), pp.107-122.

Gascoyne has pointed out that 'Concert of Angels',[131] like 'Elsewhere' (and 'Requiem'), was written before the end of the thirties and that unaccountably they were omitted from ***Poems 1937-42***. While the title of the former denotes both the union of the angels and their celestial harmony, there is at the same time an implied visual link between these figures representing the winged 'spirit host of/angels (lines 6-7) and Jouve's line, discussed earlier, 'Despair has wings'. In addition, this essentially pictorial poem is predicated on the notion of a straining upward movement from the depths of the void or abyss, and it is lit with an unmistakable visionary radiance.

'Concert of Angels' is structured in three sections: the first of 18 lines; the second in two stanzas of 7 and 6 lines respectively; the third, again of two stanzas, of ten and eight lines each. There is no attempt by the poet to develop a rhyme scheme, though he maintains an insistent, incantatory rhythm throughout.

Gascoyne has said that 'Concert of Angels' is 'recognizable as having been inspired by one of the panels of Grünewald's Isenheim altarpiece' (*DGICP*, p.xviii). The angel on the left-hand side in Grünewald's *Incarnation* panel is playing a viol as she kneels before the figures of the Madonna and Child. Three other angels playing the same stringed instrument can be seen in the middle ground and there are, too, other much smaller angelic figures hovering in the centre of this panel. Hayum comments expressively on both the auditory feature, 'the group of music-playing angels', and the effulgence which bathes them: 'With the effect of vibratory radiance of light that envelops Grünewald's angels as they vigorously bow their instruments, the artist creates a perceptual equivalent for the harmonious chords of a musical sequence that seem to well up [...] and resound in the viewer's world' (*AHIA*, p.100).

Gascoyne's emphasis on the auditory quality of his verse seems to chime consciously with the music played by the angels in the *Incarnation* at Isenheim. He imagines the sound initially as 'Wind!' (line 1), and the 'deep echoes' emanate from the

[131] In Add.56041 under the working heading *The Open Tomb*, Gascoyne lists 'Kyrie', ;The Last Hour' ['Tenebrae'], 'De Profundis', 'Lachrymae', 'Ex Nihilo' and 'Pieta', followed by 'Concert of Angels'. The poem is no.20/20 under *World Without End* (*The Open Tomb*) in **Appendix 2C**, along with 'Lachrymae' (6), 'Kyrie' (7), 'De Profundis' (8), 'Ex Nihilo' (9), and it is listed, too, in Add.62947

angelic musicians (lines 5-7). The setting is the present, and the situation that of the spiritual condition of contemporary man. We recognize that the poet is indicating an absence of belief in the life of the spirit,[132] the absence of faith, as the wind is invoked to wake mankind from its 'stupor' to an awareness of 'the lost celestial sense', represented by light not by 'night', nor by 'negation'. Gascoyne focuses the reader's attention on the angels' faces and hands in lines 7-13):

> Their intensely rapt
> Almost inhuman faces luminous
> With utmost concentration: the incisive bows
> Held in their long keen hands – enchanted swords
> The earth-binding ear and so release
> The lost celestial sense – carving broad curves
> Across the nerve-taut strings.

The 'clear cathartic' music, 'like invisible/ irradiations of sheer light, like resonance/ of huge cathedral bell-notes hovering/ over the earth in rings of fiery mist', wells out 'into infinity's unfathomed well' (13-18). Light and music are as one, illuminating the cosmos, and there is a clear echo here of Sir Thomas Browne's 'music of the spheres' in his *Religio Medici.*

In Section II, in the abyss, 'the sonorous black well' (19), the forms which 'emerge and palely fade and form again' with their 'vision-clouded faces [...] with hidden eyes/ and hungry mouths like mouths distraught with prayer' (23-5), are in a latent state. 'Darkness's mouth' which 'opens in us now' is associated with upward movement in the '*straining* hymns, with stars *like fountains burning upwards* with the *impetus/* of flying gothic buttresses whose *rainbow-arc/*both *aspiration* and sustaining force contains' (emphases added).

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under *World Without End*, together with 'Kyrie, 'De Profundis' and 'Lachrymae' as 'Concert of Angels (Grünewald)' in **Appendix 2D.**

[132] Stanford recalls a conversation at which he was present in 1949 between Gascoyne and a young minister at Richmond's Congregational Church. They discussed principally 'the religious nature of genuine existential thinking.' Commenting on Sartre's kind of existentialism, Gascoyne declared: '[it is] the post experimental intellectual exploitation of the experience of existing.' He added, 'The kind of philosophy that I wish to discuss, is *actual spiritual activity* [my italics]. Not all that goes on within man is what the Marxists call "mere reflection".' This seems to me to be relate directly to the thrust of the poem's argument developed some dozen years earlier in 'Concert of Angels', and in 'Elsewhere'. Quoted in (*GTU*), p.74.

Section III develops the antinomies human/divine, life/death, mortal/eternal, as the speaker addresses the 'transcendental source/of every human cry' (with its echoes of Blake's 'London') which is replenished by 'the deepest chords of death' (34), 'shrill destruction's laughter' (34-5), 'the thrilling arias of love' (35-6), the quasi-Surrealistic 'shock-torn sobs of rape and copulation' (37-8), 'exiled sighs' (38), 'corrupted beauty's ravishing lament' (39).

The last line of the fourth stanza, 'transference from mortal sound into eternal song', leads into the final stanza which takes the form of an invocation or prayer in a metaphysical dimension:

> Let there be praise, praise and
> Praise, organic orchestra and cloudy choir,
> To the great incandescent power
> Of sublimation (42-5)

as we are directed to a higher plane where clay will be brought to life 'with sacred fire' and 'the grey dress of sleep and sickness' consumed (46-7). The pictorial nature of the poem, painterly in its chiaroscuro effects and upward motion, finds its optimistic resolution through the 'spirit host of angels': Gascoyne imagines the phalanx of angels joining together in concert to arrest mankind's downward plunge into the void, to bring us once more to awareness of 'the lost celestial sense' by maintaining a balance 'in perfect tension between dark and light/ the horrid depth, the spiritual height' (48-9), collapsing the contradictions. Neville Braybrooke sees this poem as 'a meditation on the nature of the Heavenly Host' (*NBPS*).

Gascoyne himself has long forgotten his initial plan to compose a sequence of *ten* poems rather than eight. I strongly suspect that 'Concert of Angels' may well have been the ninth poem of *Miserere* and 'Elsewhere' the tenth. The latter, which was to be added to the collection of poems he was about to send to T.S. Eliot at the end of August, 1939 (*CJS*, p.272), takes Rimbaud's famous line for its epigraph: 'la vraie vie est ailleurs'/'the true life is elsewhere'.[133] 'Elsewhere', Gascoyne has explained, 'is an unmitigated overstatement of an underlying theme that has remained constant in almost everything I

[133] When first printed in 1946, the epigraph below the title read: 'L'existence est ailleurs' (Rimbaud).

have written since then [the end of the 1930s): the intolerable nature of human reality when devoid of all spiritual, metaphysical dimension' (*DGICP*, p.xviii). But he encountered real problems relating to language and expression at that time, and agonized in his journal about his inability to find 'the right *tone*, the adequate *style*' to convey his 'vision of man's present spiritual crisis'. No simile is powerful enough 'to convey the utter blindness of desperation at the core of all this. Oh *Anguish*!' (*CJS,* 22.VIII.39, p.256).

'Elsewhere' begins:

> Profound is inexistence on this earth
> Among our human kind:
> Profound
> The weight of absence on the sleeping heart
> That all war's detonations cannot rouse.

Throughout the poem, there is a play of oppositions between 'existence' (line 40) and what Gascoyne terms 'inexistence' (1, 28), meaning a state or condition of unfulfilled existence (like the inchoate beings in the darkness of the void in 'Concert of Angels'), that is, life without the spiritual element. Like 'negation' (4, 32), 'absence' (16, 29) is another key word in the pattern of ideas. Modern man is incomplete, lacks wholeness because that most vital of conditions, 'faith in the spiritual', is absent (wilfully so, is the implication as with Blake's 'mind-forg'd manacles') in an increasingly materialistic world where commercial production is of paramount importance.[134] The *eyes* of 'selfless hordes [...] red-rimmed and haggard' give way to *mouths* in the roar

> Of cannon-mouths, of sawtoothed mouths, the mouths
> Of printing-presses, megaphonic maws
> Of the possessed and the psychotic: and the pounding waves
> Of automatic labour on the daily shore (9-12)

The 'hordes' are the living-dead, like those who cross London Bridge in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, or like the sleepwalking-pedestrians who advance menacingly towards the

[134] In his 'Afterword' to (*CJS*) he writes: 'Communism [...] is based on a materialism that [...] is bald, reductionist and, paradoxically, because its morality has no transcendental sanction, puritanically intolerant. It is also essentially the same as that which forms the effective ideological basis of our Western consumer society, for which religion, metaphysical speculation and/or, for that matter "transcendental meditation", are no more than leisure activities to be either indulged in or ignored because we are free, as are the market forces determining this society's vicissitudes' (p.392).

viewer in Edvard Munch's painting 'Spring Evening on Karl Johan' (1891). The poet's revulsion towards our consumerist culture with its dominant cult of advertising and inescapable noise is palpable here, and seems to prefigure part of Section II of the later ***Night Thoughts***, while the last line quoted above evokes Gascoyne's memory of images from Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis*.

The soul is 'profoundly absent from its body's condemned house' (16) which is associated with 'the dirt/Of ruined palaces' in line 8. Man's soul is 'stunned' (15), 'The taste of pleasure's now like sand between the teeth;/Worn-out, the nerves are numb' (17-18). There is no genuine quality of life. 'Death's/Most sumptuous music strikes the ear like wind/Forced dumbly out of emptiness' (18-20). This is not the wind which emanates from the angelic musicians, invoked to rouse mankind from his stupor in 'Concert of Angels'. Here is nothingness. Negation. Death of the spirit. Bleakness is all.

In this second section (17-29), there is a cosmic dimension (as in 'Concert of Angels') where the sun 'strikes [...] through the diffuse light of interstellar space' (21-4). But if 'the dead face of the moon hangs like a curse' (26) so, in reverse, does 'the curse of inexistence hang like a moon', and for as long as 'the spirit sleeps/Profoundly absent from the earth' (28-9). It is the transcendental to which we should aspire. The repetition of 'hang/s' reinforces the unacceptable weight of the absence of the spiritual.

In lines 30-40 two worlds appear to co-exist: that of the materialistic present and despairing situation in 'the Wilderness' (with its biblical overtones, *CJS*, p.255); the other, that to which men must aspire, which is on 'Negation's further shore' where 'dazzling is the sheer/Rockface set like an ice-barred gate' (32-3), where 'all the earth's ruins are rebuilt/Of stone that sings' (36-7). An oxymoron, 'cold fire burns' and the partial internal rhyme and oxymoron of 'The scentless incense of the air' (37-8) underscore the Otherness of this 'true existence' to which 'the Unnamed returns'. 'Unnamed' because the spiritual element, the transcendental, is not recognized as needful by present-day man living under the horrifying shadow of impending war. But the possibility of awareness is acknowledged.

'Elsewhere' is a poem of two long stanzas of 16 and 24 lines; they are of an unequal length but form a discernible pattern on the printed page. There is intermittent rhyme: 'roar – maws – shore'; 'deep – sleeps'; 'light – nights'; 'burns – returns'. There are images, and traces of colour here, but this is a complex poem to read; it is difficult to follow the pattern of ideas in what is essentially an abstract argument developed in the context of what constitutes for the poet the blatant materialism of contemporary Western society. Gascoyne himself is struggling here, too, to articulate what seems to him to be the inexpressible in poetry as opposed to prose which might, he feels, be more appropriate (*CJS*, p.256).

Sutherland's illustration for the second section of ***Poems 1937-42***, designated *Metaphysical* (though Gascoyne would have preferred 'Metapsychological'), is to the poet 'the most mysterious of the set'. 'It obviously represents a being,' writes Gascoyne, and just as obviously one of a supernatural order. [...] The most cryptic thing about it is that its head has no face or features, but resembles a visor without perforations for the eyes, surmounted by what at first sight appear to be four plumes. [that] could well be transmuted flames, appearing against a pink-tinged patch of sky. I have always found this quasi-Surrealist apparition deeply impressive, and at least in its inscrutability appropriate to the subliminal depths the poems it precedes were intended to invoke' (*DGGS*, p.114). There are two epigraphs to the 'Metaphysical poems', the first taken from *The Book of the Dead*,[135] from the culture of ancient Egypt, the second from a text of Chinese wisdom, *The Book of the Open Flower* which, Gascoyne told Rémy, 'has been translated into German with a preface by Jung' (*DGUI*, p.125).

In that same conversation with Rémy, Gascoyne says that he's never met anyone who properly understands the sense of these two poems, 'The Descent' and 'The Open Tomb'. 'They refer to the Prophecy of the Great Pyramid in which I've never wholly believed, but it is something that you could call a vision of the artist, an aesthetic symbol, which was very popular at the beginning of this century.' What follows is an amalgam of comments made on different occasions to both Rémy and Duclos (the translation is mine throughout).

[135] 'Without cease and forever there is celebrated the Mystery of the Open Tomb, the Resurrection of Osiris-Ra, the Increated Light'.

'According to this myth,' says Gascoyne, 'the Great Pyramid contains a passage, a double corridor ["shaft" in the poem]: one section descends and the other rises towards the surface. The descent is measured from the entrance in "pyramid inches" (slightly different from the British inch), each of which corresponds to a year; the length of this descent thus corresponds to the time which separates the moment when the pyramid was built and the moment of reincarnation, of the death and Resurrection of Christ. If we calculate it, we are at this moment in the ascending section. It should be made clear, too, that the pyramid was not designed to be the tomb of a pharaoh but to be a temple of initiation.' (*DGUI*, p.127). The initiate 'must climb the stairs and lie down in the tomb which wasn't looked upon as a sarcophagus but as a bed; he was, perhaps, rendered unconscious by a drug'[136] [...] 'plunged into a state of suspended animation, hypnotized, if you like. After having spent three days and three nights in the Great Pyramid, the initiate left the illuminated open tomb. Reading behind all that, mankind descends towards sleep and death and what follows in the progressive illumination of the soul' (*DGUI*, p.127).[137] The poem, 'The Descent', 'is a kind of fusion of Egyptian and Christian mythologies: as far as I know, the Egyptians didn't have angels in their religion...' (*DGUI*, p.127). 'In Egyptian mythology, as in the fundamentally Christian concept, it's a question of death and resurrection. I'm trying to show that we pass through what Carlyle calls Palingenesis' (*MDC*, p.36).

Duclos commented: 'Your Christ seems to me sometimes a bit pagan, and appears to be identified with the sun.' Gascoyne replied: 'Yes, I attach great importance to Anaktaton, the heretical pharaoh who instituted the religion of the sun which, on his death, was suppressed.'[138] O.V. de L. Milosz [whose poetry Gascoyne has translated]

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[136] Interview with Michèle Duclos, *Cahiers sur la Poésie*, num.2, numéro special David Gascoyne (Université de Bordeaux III, 1984), p.36. Further citings as (*MDC*).

[137] He told Duclos: 'Without explaining this, and perhaps without being fully aware of it, that is the idea behind many of my early poems, [...] It is the same idea expressed by Gide in his title *Si le Grain ne Meurt*: to die to be reborn as something else. I see that in society, I think, not as a holocaust which would destroy the whole of mankind, but something very serious, a great crisis; it is approaching, I can feel it' *(MDC*, p.36). 'There are links with the Resurrection of Christ and also with an old English liturgical drama of the Middle Ages entitled "The Harrowing of Hell", in which Christ descends into Hell to comfort the damned.' (*DGUI*, p.127). Gascoyne explains to Duclos that 'The Open Tomb' isn't ambiguous but has a double meaning- as is frequent in English poetry, and he references Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (*MDC*, p.36).

[138] His uncollected poem, 'Oleograph', published in January 1934, confirms the accuracy of this, with the emphasis on the sun and its association with ancient Egypt.

after his illumination expressed quite similar ideas. 'I'm not a Gnostic,[139] I'm not a Manichean. The Gnostics interest me enormously and I agree with certain of their ideas. What I don't like about them is their elitism pushed to the extreme' (*MDC*, p.38).

Later in the conversation, Gascoyne mentions 'The Conspirators', published by John Lehmann in *New Writing* in 1939, and part of a long, unfinished poem which was to be entitled 'Come Dungeon Dark', and goes on to explain how Piranesi's imagery continues to fascinate him, how the painter's *Prisons* 'represents the unconscious, the open tomb…' (*MDC*, p.39).

The significance for Gascoyne of the Egyptian deity, Anaktaton, the pharaoh who established the religion of the sun, is bound up with his obsession with the notion of the sun at midnight to which there are several references in his poetry,[140] and with those poems in *Miserere* which highlight in Manicheistic terms the primordial conflict between light and darkness, and with what Braybrooke calls 'the subtle punnings about the Sun and the Son of God, both of which, in different senses, are the Light of the World' (*NBPS*).[141]

* * *

Chronologically, the twenty-two poems in the second, '*Metaphysical*' (or 'metapsychological'), section, begin with three poems drafted in 1937;[142] the others range

[139] Gnosticism: religious movement, characterized by a belief in gnosis, through which the spiritual element in man could be released from its bondage in matter: regarded as a heresy by the Christian Church. Manicheism: based on a supposed primordial conflict between light and darkness, or goodness and evil. System of religious doctrines, including elements of Gnosticism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Bhuddism, etc.

[140] In a late poem, 'On Re-Reading Jacob Boehme's *Aurora*', he writes: 'Boehme/Foresaw the sun at midnight would be seen/To rise with rays like healing wings and shine/On the whole world man's fears had else destroyed'.

[141] Braybrooke refers us to the last of the ten fragments which form Gascoyne's '*Religio Poetae*', in which 'he suggests that the sun's rays illuminating the prices scrawled in chalk in a market may be interpreted as possible signs of "the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth"'(Ibid.).

[142] 'Mozart: Sursum Corda', 'The Three Stars: A Prophecy', 'Epode' ('Prophetic Mouth').

from January/February 1938 to Summer and September 1939;[143] then from November 1940, Winter 1940-41 to March/April 1941.[144] The additional five Jouve translations date from 1941-2, while 'Inferno', 'Mountains', 'The Wall' and 'Dichters Leben' were published for the first time in ***Poems 1937-42***.

Philip Gardner claims that these 'Metaphysical' poems present 'Gascoyne's spiritual odyssey from the nihilistic vision of "Bottomless depths of roaring emptiness" ('Inferno') through the "too-long suffered tyranny and/Celebrated scandal of man's life" ('Insurrection') to "that Bethlehem beyond despair/Where from the womb of Nothing shall be born/A Son" ('The Three Stars')' (*PGDG*, p.145). He argues that the 'visionary outer-directed poems of the last two sections of ***Poems 1937-42*** though entitled "Personal" and "Time and Place" are not essentially separate', and he suggests that they complement 'the visionary inner-directed poems' of the "Metaphysical" section (Bid). It is interesting to develop this further, noting the emphasis in particular poems on *interiority*: 'Broken light-webs from the depths/Or *inward* heights ('World Without End'); 'Out of an *innermost* catastrophe/ [...] a prey to *inner* void' ('Mountains'); 'By *inner* sky's impenetrable shell' ('The Fortress'); 'Only the strange/*Interior* ray of the bleak flame' ('Dichters Leben'); 'and the *interior* suffering like a silver wire' ('Cavatina'); ' [...] that Angel's eye/Who sees beyond the *inward* depth' ('The Descent'); '[...] (though none may tell/The *inmost* meaning of this Mystery)' ('The Three Stars: A Prophecy')[145] [my emphases in the preceding quotations]. The interface between interior and exterior worlds is shown to be but a veneer or a 'screen' which is 'of a thin inch's fraction' ('Inferno'), which Gascoyne highlights in the following lines: '[...] the splintering of that screen which shields/Man's puny consciousness from Hell' ('Inferno'); '[...] Reveal/The immaterial world concealed/By mortal deafness and the screen of sense' ('Mozart: Sursum Corda').

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[143] 'World Without End', 'To Benjamin Fondane' (later 'I.M. Benjamin Fondane'), 'Lowland', 'Eve'. 'Cavatina', 'Venus Androgyne' and 'The Fault' were rewritten before publication in ***Poems 1937-42***, 'The Descent' (previously 'Inhumation'), 'The Open Tomb', 'Artist' (later 'Philosophical Artisan', Insurrection, 'The Fortress', 'Winter Garden'; 'Strophes Elégiaques à la mémoire d'Alban Berg'.

[144] 'Amor Fati', 'Legendary Fragment'.

[145] See notebook draft, 'Three Stars' in **Appendix 2F.**

At the end of my commentary on 'Concert of Angels' I referred to a journal entry on 22nd August 1939 written shortly before the outbreak of war, in which Gascoyne laments his failure to achieve the appropriate language and tone to articulate the contemporary spiritual crisis of mankind. He admits to an 'absence of images' because 'the essential nature of the experience [is] negation,' and he looked to Jung during the war which led him to books on alchemy 'in search of new sources of images' (*CJS*, p.256). He explained to Michel Rémy that:

> The allegories and images which one finds in them do indeed correspond to ideas for which one would go far in order to find equivalent images for the formulation of these ideas. They are all inspired by nature, and natural forms like metals, stones, flowers, sun, stars, moon. These are regarded as imaging inner realities' (*DGEI*, p.269).

There is, in effect, a pattern to the diction of these 'Metaphysical' poems: 'mountains', 'peaks', 'rock' and 'valley', are set against 'desert', 'plain', 'fields', and both against 'sky/skies', 'cloud', 'moon', 'star(s)', so that at times there is a definite cosmic element. Glyn Pursglove refers perceptively to 'the astronomical infinities of the spirit's range' as one of 'the recurrent symbols in Gascoyne's poetic language' (*GPCP*, p.374).

'Light', 'sun (light)' are opposed by 'night', 'dark', 'black (ness)', 'fire' and 'red' are balanced by 'ice', and the world of the spirit with that of 'flesh' and 'blood'; Daniel E. Rivas points to Jouve's concern to 'harmonize' antinomies in his own poems.[146] The Void or abyss is ever present in Gascoyne's second section, associated but not synonymous with 'hell', 'descent' and 'depths'. 'Pain', 'grief' and 'anguish' resonate throughout these poems. He would write in 1946:

> The Spirit can return to life only through the secret channel of our inmost individuality. Each man must undertake alone and in silence the task of creating a new spiritual reality with which to fill the Void forever underlying objective and empirical reality's changing and uncertain surface.

[146] Rivas notes that Jouve's *Noces* [1931]and *Sueur de Sang* [1935]'constitute the preliminary "dark phase" of gradual awakening to the reality of opposites'. Jouve's poetry, he writes, 'posits a world of seemingly irreconcilable contraries, which the poet seeks to harmonize'. *Encyclopedia of Literature in the World*, Vol.E-K (St. James Press, 1999), p.571.

He added, 'The Void itself cannot be apprehended except by means of a symbolic expression (self-contradictory representation) [...]'.[147]

The poet, Thomas Blackburn, is struck by the 'lurid glare and sense of apocalyptic revelation'.[148] In the second half of the 1930s there were clear indications of an apocalyptic finale to the decade in the rapidly deteriorating political situation in Europe with the rise of the fascist dictators and the horrors of the Civil War in Spain. And England in 1940-41, especially London, confronted a real apocalypse: systematic bombing and a threatened invasion by Hitler. Francis Carey has suggested that Surrealism, 'with its species of "profane illumination" [W. Benjamin], and predisposition in favour of primordial myth, revelation and esoteric knowledge, provided another medium for apocalyptic intimations.' [149] She argues that

> Apocalyptic terms of reference are so deeply ingrained in Western culture that they have taken on an archetypal function. Science and technology, politics and art have been variously co-opted as part of 'manifest destiny' or perceived as providing a surrogate form of eschatological purpose, promising renewal as well as calamity, the principle of hope required for the fulfilment of a redemptive plan for history. Without the belief in redemption [the apocalypse's] original meaning is destroyed (op. cit. p.270).

Carey points out, and the thrust of this is particularly relevant to Gascoyne, that 'The greatest threat to the redemptive vision comes from cultural pessimism and social alienation, creating a metaphysical void or what "a modernist would call [...] the sensation of the abyss" (Andrei Bely, *Petersburg* [1916], translated by David McDuff, Harmondsworth 1995, p.358). It has been central to the modern experience of personal crisis' (Ibid.).

Jouve, who with Fondane exerted such a 'decisive and lasting' (*CJS,* p.399) influence on Gascoyne, addresses the notion of 'catastrophe' in the penultimate paragraph of the preface to his collection of poems, *Sueur de Sang*, 'The Unconscious, Spirituality,

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[147] 'Note on Symbolism: its role in metaphysical thought', in *Poetry Quarterly*, Vol.8, No.2 (summer 1946), pp.86-7. Reprinted in *David Gascoyne: Selected Prose 1934-1996*, ed. Roger Scott (Enitharmon Press, 1998), p.78.

[148] *The Price of an Eye* (Longmans, 1961), p.135.

[149] 'The Apocalyptic Imagination: between tradition and modernity' in *The Apocalypse and the Shape of Things to Come*, ed. Frances Carey (British Museum Press, 1999), p.292. Further citings as (*FCTA*).

Catastrophe'.[150] This important essay, published in 1935 (four years before the outbreak of the Second World War), was translated by Gascoyne at the end of the thirties and clearly provides his alternative heading, 'Metapsychological', for the poems collected in this section II: 'Incalculable is the extension of our sense of the tragic that is brought us by metapsychology'[151]. Jouve's message is an urgent one:

> At this very hour, civilization is faced with the possibility of the direst of catastrophes; a catastrophe all the more menacing in that its first and last cause lies within man's own inner depths, mysterious in their action and governed by an independent logic; moreover, man is now as never before aware of the pulse of Death within him. The psycho-neurosis of the world has reached so advanced a stage that we can but fear the possibility of an act of suicide. Human society is reminded of the condition in which it found itself in the time of St. John, or round about the year 1000; it awaits the end, hoping it will come soon.

And he employs heightened language in his reference to the Book of Revelation and medieval visions of the apocalypse.

> [...] we find ourselves heavy laden with the accumulated weight of instruments of Destruction; the noisome iniquities of its nations make of Europe 'the great harlot ...seated upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns...' (*GUSC*, p.114).[152]

Gascoyne notes in his journal (23.1.39) that he has just received from Jouve the newly published N.R.F. edition of *Kyrie*. 'There is something miraculous,' he writes, 'in his being able to continue to create poetry so intense and pure at a time like this. The first of the two new sections, *Les Quatre Cavaliers*, is magnificent.' He goes on:

> Few writers' work could at first sight appear so remote from the world of politics, yet few poets have so profoundly suffered the events of current history, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Spain; and I know no one who has so fully expressed the *apocalyptic* atmosphere of our time or with so strong an accent of the 'sublime' (*CJS*, pp.242-3).

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[150] Gascoyne commented to Arta Lucescu-Boutcher: 'Fondane was more conscious of it [chaos] than most writers. Jouve also struggled in his poetry to express the feeling of chaos' (*ALBI*, p.11).

[151] First published in *Poetry* (London), Vol.1, No.4 (January-February 1941), p.112. Further citings as (*GUSC*).

[152] Jouve's beast (in Revelation 17:3-6) is the Whore of Babylon astride the Seven-Headed Dragon, as in Hans Burgkmair's (1473-1531) woodcut 'The Whore of Babylon', or in Albrecht Dürer's (1471-1528) 'The Woman of the Apocalypse and the Seven-Headed Dragon' (Revelations 12, 1-6) 1498. Both are in the British Museum collection.

Both poets pursue a burning spiritual quest; for both, their role as poets was to testify to the truth at a time of national danger. The 'catastrophe' of the title of Jouve's preface is a reference, Margaret Callender says, to 'the menace of a European war'. She argues that when Jouve referred to a 'catastrophe' he did so 'by adopting Freud's method and diagnosing the spiritual diseases of our age as though psychoanalyzing an individual'. The French writer had developed 'his apprehension of the triumph of the self-destructive elements in European civilization until in *Kyrie* the conviction bursts forth in apocalyptic and prophetic language'.[153] The connection here with Gascoyne is strong.

Stephen Romer overstates (and misleads) when he claims that 'He has been the most apocalyptic of the Apocalyptics'.[154] It is relevant to note that in his plan for the 'ghost' collection *The Conquest of Defeat*, Gascoyne included 'Apocalyptic Ode' under the section 'Poems on Contemporary and General Themes', and the same title appears in June 1940 under 'Projected Poems' (See **Appendix 2E**).[155] While I would agree with Romer's contention that there is a marked sense of the apocalyptic in regard to the imagery, tone and content of several of the poems and journal entries from 1938 onwards, there is no validity in placing Gascoyne, which I take to be Romer's intention, with the New Apocalypse poets of the forties. The fact is that Gascoyne, who (like Dylan Thomas) is often wrongly associated with them, followed his own individual and

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[153] *The Poetry of Pierre Jean Jouve* (Manchester University Press, 1965), pp.193, 194. Further citings as (*MCPJJ*).

[154] 'Angry Waiting': a review of *Selected Poems* (Enitharmon Press, 1994) in the *Times Literary Supplement* (December 15th 1995), p.21. Further citings as (*SRAW*).

[155] Certainly Gascoyne has always been interested in the Apocalypse: he gave a talk on the subject at St. James, Piccadilly on 14th June in the early 1980s, and I have a photocopy of the typescript of the programme in which he lists the readings he has chosen. The first, notably, is Jouve's preface, together with his own translation of Jouve's 'The Resurrection of the Dead', followed by eight poems from ***Poems 1937-42***: 'Kyrie', 'Inferno', 'Mountains', 'Insurrection', 'The Open Tomb', 'The Three Stars', 'Epode', 'Zero, September 1939'. Gascoyne may well have been familiar with S.W. Hayter's six engravings (1932), which accompanied Georges Hugnet's Surrealist verses. Both men became friends as did poet and translator, George Reavey, who worked on his poems, *Faust's Metamorphoses* (1932), with Hayter. The latter contributed six engravings and was influenced by Reavey's concept of 'Apocalypse'. The poems 'De Revolutionibus' and 'The Rape of Europe' in Reavey's later collection, *Quixotic Perquisitions* (1938), carry an unmistakable note of the apocalyptic, as Europe stands on what Graham Greene called the 'the dangerous edge of things'. In the preface to the typescript of the unpublished 'The Endless Chain' (July-October 1938), Reavey writes in a charged tone: 'Our world is that of Marlowe or Faust in the twelfth hour ... [not] that *the* world is coming to an end, but that *a* world is approaching its tragic dénouement'. Quoted by Thomas Dillon Redshaw in his contribution, '"Unificator": George Reavey and the Europa Poets of the 1930s' in *Modernism and Ireland: The Poetry of the 1930s*, (eds.) Patricia Coughlan & Alex Davis (Ireland: Cork University Press, 1995), pp.262-3.

unaffiliated trajectory as a writer after his rejection of Surrealism.[156] Frank Kermode asserts in his penetrating and wide-ranging essay, 'The Modern Apocalypse', that Yeats 'is certainly an apocalyptic poet, but he does not take it literally'. He considers this 'characteristic of the attitude not only of modern poets but of the modern literary public to the apocalyptic elements'. Both Gascoyne and Jouve, like Yeats, looked to renewal. 'A deep conviction of decadence,' argues Kermode, [is] allied to 'a prophetic confidence of renovation'.[157] While Jouve made clear references to the demonology of the Antichrist and the associated Beasts in a number of poems, both he and Gascoyne balanced the destructive and redemptive elements of Apocalypse in the Book of Revelation.[158] For Jouve 'the creator of living values (the poet) must be against catastrophe' (*GUSC*, p.114). He and Gascoyne would have supported Berdyaev's contention that in a dynamic eschatology 'The creative act of man is needed for the coming of the Kingdom of God. God is in need of and awaits it'.[159] For Jouve, too, the void was inescapable: 'Yet still does man goad himself onwards into battle, on into the abyss' (Ibid., p.113).

With the world in 'severe crisis' (*CJS*, p.255) on 22nd August 1939, Gascoyne is more keenly aware than previously of 'the mental and spiritual war' (p.252) within himself. A few days earlier, he has re-read Baudelaire: 'Had never quite realized before how much "in line" he is. He never covers up the fundamental worst. He records an intensely intimate expression of the metaphysical problems which are most important to me at the moment (tho' he does not fully *exteriorize* them as I am trying to do' (pp.252-3). On 10th October, his 23rd birthday, he writes: 'My book will be a sort of philosophically-determined prophecy (The Greater Crisis: the Holy Revolution: the New Christendom)'. The war is horrifying, 'yet the Future of this Century has begun to burn

[156] Thomas never belonged to the group but certainly influenced individual members of it because of the mythopoeic quality of his verse. The Apocalypse poets, Henry Treece, J.F. Hendry and G.S. Fraser in particular, believed in 'Myth, as a personal means of reintegrating the personality', and that 'no existent political system, Left or Right, no artistic ideology, Surrealism or the political school of Auden, was able to provide this freedom' for which they stood: 'greater freedom, economic no less than aesthetic, from machines and mechanistic thinking'. These extracts from their programme are quoted by David Daiches in (*DDPCB*), pp.157-8.

[157] *The Sense of an Ending*: Studies in the Theory of Fiction (Oxford University Press, 1967), pp.98-9.

[158] Many years later, Gascoyne would write in his book of aphorisms, *The Sun at Midnight*: 9. 'Cosmic cruelty has caused the perversion of Nature, and above all human nature, on our planet. Man is not the cause but the vessel of wrath, the diseased victim and the intended instrument of this temporally disastrous working through process. But the cure of man's great illness has been long revealed and known. Now is the time to *understand* how what we call Redemption really works'. (*DGSAM*).

[159] Quoted by Ian Christie in 'Celluloid Apocalypse', Chapter 7 (*FCTA*), p.335.

with an extraordinary, unseen and secret radiance...' (p.274). Hugh Haughton refers to these 'apocalyptic insights' which 'have some bearing on the poetry of "the Greater Crisis" of the early war years'.[160] Romer, too, acknowledges that 'the political anger, involvement – and specificity – characteristic of the poets of the 1930s - combine impressively with the apocalyptic, sanctioned here by the circumstances of the war' (*SRAW*, p.21).

The Romantic artist, John Martin, produced apocalyptic landscapes on an extensive scale, with his 'almost Spenglerian sense of historical catastrophe'.[161] In his huge, visionary landscapes of 1826-8, mountains, promontories, valleys and lowlands dwarf the human figures presented as sinful beings who may be seen to face destruction. In one of the later large canvases, *The Last Judgment* (c.1850-3) Martin, who is engaging with the concept of the city of London as Babylon[162] and the attendant 'chaotic aspects of the modern industrial world', offers the spectator a vision of the Heavenly city of Jerusalem in the background on the left, while the centre foreground is dominated by a yawning abyss (the 'Bottomless Pit' of medieval apocalyptic representations by Dürer, Burgkmair, Lucas Cranach 1).[163] The tiny human figures in Martin's paintings find a counterpart in the implications of human smallness set against 'the great Face' in Gascoyne's 'Epode'.

D.G. Rossetti and William Frith called attention to 'the perspective of feeling' in Martin's work.[164] There is a strong connection here with the emotional and imaginative intensity – allied to the visuality - of Gascoyne's approach in these poems to his painterly landscapes on a broad canvas: he places the tension of personal conflict against the immensity of the 'depths' and heights. He finds in the natural features of the landscape a language adequate to inner experience. Gascoyne looks to an elemental force, a kind of

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[160] 'Writing the Night': a review of *Selected Poems* (Enitharmon Press, 1994) in *London Review of Books* (25th January 1996), p.14.

[161] Richard Humphreys: 'John Martin' in *Makers of Nineteenth Century Culture 1800-1914*, ed. Justin Wintle (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), p.403.

[162] A theme which fascinated Gascoyne for many years until the composition of ***Night Thoughts***, as I have indicated in my paper on that text.

[163] The abyss is ready to receive a long train whose passengers are shrieking with terror out of the windows, and another drawn by a fire-breathing engine, which rush headlong towards it. The abyss will engulf them and the Whore of Babylon and the Beast 'in the form of the Powers of the World' (*FCTA*), p.225.

[164] Ibid., p.404.

revolution, to create the world anew 'surge[ing] from chaos to the light' ('Mountains'), strengthening our weak hearts 'dulled by the intolerably loud/Commotion of this tragic century'. The mountains represent metaphorically the upward movement of ascent from the depths that is imperative for humanity, but at what cost! 'Schismatic shock and rupture of earth's core' give birth to 'an innermost catastrophe'. It might be inferred here that Gascoyne is drawing in his imagery on the attempts made to 'represent Apocalypse as a form of natural and geological cataclysm' (*FCTA*, p.264).[165]

Consciously or unconsciously, Gascoyne's Surrealist imagery reappears. The reader is aware of the ubiquity of the *eye* (sometimes disembodied) which witnesses all. As I indicated in the chapter on Surrealism, this constant in the iconography of Surrealist writing and art is presented as 'both visual and poetic, as a site of confrontation, conjunction and communication. The eye,' Fiona Bradley explains, 'links inner and outer'.[166] In Gascoyne's 'Metaphysical' poems, the eye is 'hovering', 'a socket-free lone visionary eye'; 'searchlight eyes'.[167] There are twelve references to eyes in eleven poems: 'World Without End', 'Insurrection', 'Winter Garden', 'The Fortress', 'Dichters Leben', 'Cavatina', 'Philosophical Artisan', 'Legendary Fragment', 'The Descent', 'The Open Tomb', 'Epode'. The eye appears, too, in 'Requiem (1938-40)'[168]:

> [...] Grant us who wait
> [...] that we may meet at last those eyes
> In which black fires burn back to white.
>
> Beyond their reach, with diamond rays, and high
> Above the furthest fields of aether lies
> The core of glory, only ascertained
> By inward opening of Death's deep eye
> And outward flight of Spirit long sustained!
>
> [Voice]
> [...] the seed
> Is hidden from us like the omnipresent eye; it grows
> Within us through Time's flux, both night and day.

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[165] John Barnard's view, on the other hand, is that Gascoyne's 'greatest strength [is] the unpretentious representation of scenes', and he refers to activity present in the landscape. See: 'Still At It': a review of collections by Gascoyne, George Barker, John Heath-Stubbs and Kathleen Raine, in *The Review*, No.16 (October 1966), p.23.

[166] *Surrealism*. Movements in Modern Art (Tate Gallery Publishing, 1997), p.70.

[167] 'The Fortress' and 'Cavatina'. I am strongly reminded of a work by the nineteenth century artist, Odilon Redon, and the eye apparently suspended in space in his painting 'The eye like a strange Balloon wafts itself towards the infinite'.

[168] First published in the Victoria & Albert Museum programme, 15 April 1956, on the occasion of the first public performance of Priaulx Rainier's setting of Gascoyne's libretto.

However, there are other equally relevant ways of interpreting the unmistakable presence of the eye(s). In his journal reference to the 'absence of images' because 'the essential nature of the experience [is] negation',[169] Gascoyne comments that 'practically the only image that presents itself at all strongly is *a black vacuum in (or through) which two eyes are fixedly staring*' (22.VIII.39, p.256). Just as significant is a passage in Jouve's 'The Unconscious: Spirituality: Catastrophe' that foregrounds the notion of the all-seeing penetrating eye: 'Even more incalculable [is] the extension of the knowledge gained by that eye which gazes into our secret parts – which eye is none other than our own' (p.112). Gascoyne's principal concern is with that inner searching eye.

The visual element has a counterpart in sound - or the absence of it - in a number of the poems: 'splintering', 'roaring' ('Insurrection'); 'Stampeding herds of horses and a cry,/More long and lamentable as the rains increase,/From out of the beyond' ('Lowland'); 'Schismatic shock and rupture of earth's core- /Fortify with the stern silence of your white/Our weak hearts dulled by the intolerably loud/Commotion of this tragic century' ('Mountains'); 'The season's anguish, crashing whirlwind, ice [...] Pure music is the cry that tears/The birdless branches in the wind' ('Winter Garden'); 'the rumour-burdened air [...] the sostenuto of the sky/Supernal voices flood the ear of clay/And transpierce the dense skull: Reveal/The immaterial world concealed/By mortal deafness' ('Mozart: Sursum Corda'); 'Its force like violins in pure lament' ('Cavatina'); 'Turbulence, uproar, echo of a War/Beyond our frontier: burning, blood and black/Impenetrable smoke which only blast/Of Archangelic trumpet could transpierce' ('Insurrection'); 'There rose a heavy sighing and a troubled light:/Reverberated in the ears and eyes/And stunned the senses' ('Legendary Fragment'); 'The upward creeping blood whispers her name' ('Eve'); Speaking is fatal: Do not break/That vacuum out of which our silence speaks/Of its sad speechless fury to the star' ('Amor Fati'); 'The cloudy chasm like a gasping mouth/From whence the last deep cry so thoroughly torn' ('The Descent'); 'Vibrant with silence is that last sealed room/That fever-quickened breathing cannot

[169] Jouve himself acknowledges in *En Miroir*, his 'diary without dates', that 'The Nada theme [is] present in nearly all my work [...] "Nada" – Nothing – borrowed from mystical Spain before *Matière Céleste/Heavenly Matter.* The Nada or Absence theme has deeply haunted and pursued me'. Three pages later, he writes: 'The Nada theme. It has run through the whole of my work and sustained three-quarters of it'. See *An Idiom of Night: Poems by Pierre Jean Jouve*, translated by Keith Bosley (Rapp & Whiting, 1968), pp.11 & 14. Further citings as (*KBION*).

break:/Magnetic silence and unshakably doomed breath/Hung like a screen of ice [...] Where like a sea resounds our open tomb' ('The Open Tomb'); 'Death dies and Birth was born with one great cry' ('The Three Stars: *A Prophecy*'); 'Then/The great Face turned away in silence, veiled and slow' ('Epode').

John Press sees the first group of poems, *Miserere*, as a sequence that 'makes an immediate and profound impression', precisely because Gascoyne uses the symbols of Christianity 'to elucidate the darkness of our world' (*JPDG, p.189)*. Elizabeth Jennings rightly terms these poems 'profoundly Christian', maintaining that Gascoyne 'has revived and transformed the old symbols which bad "religious art" so often renders lifeless, and displayed them alive, in an entirely contemporary setting' (*EJROS*, p.191). However, Press is of the opinion that the 'Metaphysical' poems are 'more obscure' since the images of violence reflecting the shattering terror of our epoch refer to no commonly accepted corpus of fact or of legend'. The beauty of these verses is 'too strange and remote to console "our weak hearts".'[170] It should be acknowledged that there are instances where Gascoyne's expression is opaque, and that paradoxically the intensity of his commitment to and involvement with his subject matter can distance the reader from the experience. Throughout this section he searches for that language which can embrace 'The wordless Meaning of the Whole/(Which may be spoken by no man)'. He aspires to objectify the menace of the time, with its persistent sense of anxiety, the 'ubiquitous fear',[171] and what John Barnard calls its 'subdued guilt' (op.cit.p.23). His own personal drama – at the same time, that of Western man confronting an inevitable conflagration, and existence itself - is played out, as I have shown, on a broad canvas. Gascoyne is driven to act on behalf of mankind, in a constant quest for the spiritual dimension. This is the thrust of 'I.M. Benjamin Fondane': 'the osseous and uncertain desert/And valley of death's shadow, where the desired /Sweet spiritual spring is sought for/But unfound'. Reading sections I and II of ***Poems 1937-42***, I am reminded of both Eugenio Montale's dictum that poetry enacts 'religious penetration of the world',[172] and of Jouve's diary entry: 'to find in the poetic act a *religious* perspective – the only answer to the void of time'.[173] The

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[170] *The Chequer'd Shade*. Reflections on Obscurity in Poetry (Oxford University Press, 1958), p.130.
[171] A phrase from 'An Unfinished Post-Auden Pre-War Proem', written c.1937, which I found in a notebook in the British Library, and first published in *London Review of Books* (25 January 1996), p.14.
[172] Quoted in Michael Hamburger, *The Truth of Poetry* (Anvil Press, new ed. 1996), pp.215-16.
[173] From 'In the Mirror: Diary without dates: extracts' (*KBION*, p.10).

anonymous reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1944 refers to Gascoyne's 'sustained struggle to find words [...] which gives an intensity and gravity to his writing, seldom found in contemporary verse'. This correspondent, too, points to 'a certain violence and opacity which blurs what he is striving to reveal'.[174] In Section IV of ***Poems 1937-42***, Gascoyne writes in 'Lines':

> Words are marks
> That flicker through men's minds like quick black dust;
> That falling, finally obliterate the faint
> Glow their speech emanates. Too soon all sparks
> Of vivid meaning are extinguished by
> The saturated wadding of Man's tongue. (10.X.41)

Bosley comments in his 'Translator's Note' on Jouve's 'very individual use of language. [...] It is an essential part of Jouve's method to be often unclear and ambiguous' (op.cit., p.7). However, I'm convinced that the occasional lack of clarity in Gascoyne's poems is never conscious or deliberate.

A.T. Tolley makes a perceptive contribution to any debate about Gascoyne's language, in his *The Poetry of the Forties*, arguing that in both ***Hölderlin's Madness*** and those poems from the proposed collection, *The Open Tomb* (See **Appendix 2B**) which appear in the 'Metaphysical' section, Gascoyne appears 'to be cultivating a somewhat archaic diction, derived from English Romantic poetry, as appropriate to the new tone of his poetry'. Then Tolley goes on to suggest that perhaps Gascoyne 'was merely trying to reproduce the rhetoric of Jouve's poetry', and that 'the violent, often conventional and decidedly unresonant diction was that of his model'.[175] The poet, Peter Levi, has indicated Gascoyne's 'ability to imbibe the essence of another poet and produce it as one's own: he has been through this mysterious process with Eluard, Jouve, Eliot, Wallace Stevens [...]'.[176] Tolley writes: 'Indeed, it is the over-ripe, archaic diction of ***Poems 1937-42*** that Gascoyne uses in translating Jouve'. His argument is that 'Jouve's *Kyrie* may have triggered for Gascoyne the conception of a body of visionary poems with a traditional religious centre. Certainly, poems from *Kyrie*, translated without the filter of

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[174] 'A Modern Inferno' (Saturday, February 5 1944), p.68. Further citings as (*AMI*).
[175] Tolley, op.cit. (Manchester University Press, 1985), pp.143-4. Further citings as (*ATTPF*).
[176] In his review of *Selected Poems* (Enitharmon Press 1994), in *Agenda*, Vol.32, Nos.3-4 (autumn-winter 1994-5), p.288.

Gascoyne's sensibility, could well be mistaken for pieces from ***Poems 1937-42***'. Tolley quotes Bosley's English version of one of the poems in *Les Quatre Cavaliers*, but it does not provide a viable illustration of the point he is making since there is no immediate or close association with Gascoyne's own diction. However, his line of reasoning is a valid one, and the following line I have selected from *Sueur de sang*, 'Space stricken with human sickness beneath the sky' (Gascoyne's translation) serves as a more apposite example. It would hardly be surprising if Gascoyne's response to Jouve and to the poems he was translating at the end of the thirties, had directly influenced his own work as he struggled to develop a new poetic language. It is understandable that Francis Carey wrongly assumes that Gascoyne himself 'who published work of an apocalyptic tenor' wrote 'The Two Witnesses'; in fact she is quoting as an example one of the five translations from Jouve in this second of ***Poems 1937-42***.

Stephen Romer approaches the 'Metaphysical' poems from a different perspective, presenting Gascoyne's diction as one of 'rich verbal orchestration'. He finds 'an extraordinary amalgam of Surreal, oneiric, unconsciously homoerotic imagery, esoterica and Kierkegaardian ethics (notably despair as a prerequisite to spiritual life)' (*SRAW*, p.21). Yet G.S. Fraser sees Gascoyne's language 'at its best as having the purity of a poet seeking to get beyond diction. Beyond "mere art", to the language of an angry and bewildered prophet'.[177]

Elizabeth Jennings identifies the dominant themes of ***Poems 1937-42*** as 'war, suffering and the loneliness of modern man' beneath which is 'the private voice seeking to express the poet's own struggle for meaning and for unity' (*EJROS*, p.190). She adds cogently: 'But even where Gascoyne is, on the one hand, most objective or, on the other, most involved and personal, the mystical,[178] visionary element is always present: if not in the lines, then between them' (p.194). Terence Tiller's observation in his broadcast is particularly relevant here: 'The key to him [Gascoyne], if one word may be taken as a key, is surely mysticism? – the personal quest for immediate knowledge and experience, to be

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[177] In 'English Poetry 1930-1960, *Sphere History of the Literature in the English Language*, Vol.7 (1970), p.288.

[178] See Anthony Thwaite, *Essays on Contemporary English Poetry* (Japan, Tokyo: Kenkyusha Ltd., 1957): 'Gascoyne is, if I can dare the pun, a mystic without a *mystique*; what he is most aware of is disbelief and negation, and his senses are stretched to breaking point to achieve something more positive', p.132.

obtained by spiritual exercise on what he calls "the sunless but how dazzling plains" of symbolic thought'. Tiller points to 'the agonies and splendours and excitements' of this quest (*TTG*, p.6).

Jennings refers to the range of the subject-matter in the poems that follow *Miserere*: '[...] light, landscape, music, the death of a friend' (Ibid.), - to which should be added philosophical questioning, and the nature of sexuality - and it is this breadth or variety which I intend now to address through a brief examination of a number of other poems in this second section.

'Lowland' plays on the double meaning of plain/valley as opposed to 'Mountains', (the poem that follows it), and the lowest point or nadir that mankind has reached. The speaker's invocation: 'out of our lowland rear/A lofty, savage and enduring monument!' echoes the violence that is stressed in the metaphorical geological fission in 'Mountains': 'Pure peaks thrust upward out of mines of energy/To scar the sky [...]. 'Schismatic shock and rupture of earth's core', give way to the apocalyptic: 'Preach to us with great avalanches, tell/How new worlds surge from chaos to the light'.

The *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer suggests that Gascoyne's 'volume [***Poems 1937-42***] might well indeed have been called "Inferno"' (*AMI*), and referring to this poem, Adam Piette reads the title as 'a trope for the Blitz' which he sees 'as apocalypse'.[179] Gavin Ewart was a friend of Gascoyne's from the thirties, and his comments on 'Inferno' are very interesting, not least for what he says about the poet he knows. Ewart refers to the speaker/poet (and quotes) 'wandering/ Through unnamed streets of a great nameless town', and argues that this does not represent 'the pose of the romantic solitary'; for Gascoyne, he tells us, 'really *was* different' and he makes the

[179] *Imagination at War: British Fiction and Poetry 1939-1945* (Macmillan Papermac, 1995), p.46. Perhaps this observation is more appropriate in relation to Eliot's lines in section II of *Little Gidding* with their direct reference to the air-raids in London in the early years of the Second World War: 'In the uncertain hour before the morning/Near the ending of interminable night/At the recurrent end of the unending/After the dark dove with the flickering tongue/Had passed below the horizon of his homing/While the dead leaves still rattled on like tin/Over the asphalt where no other sound was [...]'. These eight lines capture the scene at dawn as the enemy bombers fade from sight and hearing with shrapnel still raining down from the skies. It is in this section, as Heather Buck explains, that Eliot draws upon an episode from Dante's *The Inferno* Canto XV. See her 'T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*' (*Agenda* Editions, 1998), pp.26-27.

connection with Colin Wilson's 'outsider'. But the ultimate effect of solitariness can be, Ewart argues, 'a sort of surfeit of hopelessness', and he sees evidence of 'a genuine anxiety neurosis, depression, and some degree of alienation from human sympathy.' Gascoyne 'uses verse (as most poets do) like a kind of private psychoanalysis' (*GEVFD*, p.91).[180] The overriding impression in this very visual poem,[181] with its 'dark-blooded and convulsive cloud', and 'the scarlet and black flag' which represent 'anger and despondency, my self', *is* uncompromisingly depressing. 'The Void that undermines the world' shows itself suddenly, and the speaker is made inescapably aware of the thinness of the veneer that 'shields' both his and all mankind's awareness of the 'bottomless depths of roaring emptiness' that lie in wait.

'Winter Garden' is a direct reference to the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris.[182]

> The season's anguish, crashing, whirlwind, ice,
> Have passed, and cleansed the trodden paths
> That silent gardeners have strewn with ash.
>
> The iron circles of the sky
> Are worn away by tempest;
> Yet in this garden there is no more strife:
> The Winter's knife is buried in the earth.

The season of apparent lifelessness has taken control: the branches are 'birdless'; 'No blossom is reborn'; and 'The blue stare of the pond is blind'. There is much that is painterly here: the melancholy and coldness reminiscent of a de Chirico painting but without the attendant mystery or enigmatic quality. The unusual objectivity of this incisive depiction - what Kathleen Raine has termed in another context 'an imagery of precise realism' (*KJRDAS*, p.48) - of these public gardens (in two stanzas of three and eight lines respectively), is replaced by the subjective with the projection of the poet's self into the landscape of the poem in the third and final stanza (five lines) in the form of 'A restless stranger [...] whose eyes/Are tired of weeping, in whose breast/A savage sun consumes its hidden day'. There is a double effect: what is balanced so effectively is the

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[180] Anthony Cronin makes the point: 'Many of these poems are confessional: the poet's own malaise and failure is their subject' (*ACPI*, p.51).

[181] A reproduction in colour of Graham Sutherland's powerful gouache for this poem, dated 1978, appears in *Poetry London/Apple Magazine*, Vol.1, no.1, ed. Tambimuttu (Editions Poetry London, 1979), facing p.70.

[182] Gascoyne told Rémy that the poem was written in Paris after he returned from a Montmartre nightclub to his attic flat in the rue de la Bûcherie at about 5 a.m., at the very moment when dawn was breaking and 'I was walking alongside the Luxembourg Garden which becomes this winter garden' (*DGUI*, p.125).

microcosm of a country, a world, at war in winter, together with a bleak representation of the poet's mind and the deadness in his heart chiming with the attendant pain of longing for spring, and for a new peacetime world. The shape of the three stanzas and the single instance of rhyme in lines thirteen and sixteen ('stray' – 'day') suggest irregularity and awkwardness but, in fact, there is a consistent rhythmical alternation of ten and eight syllable lines, with few exceptions. The diction in 'Winter Garden' echoes that employed by Eliot in the first section of *Little Gidding*, particularly the last two lines of the extract below:

> When the short day is brightest, with frost and fire,
> The brief sun flames the ice, on pond and ditches,
> In windless cold that is the heart's heat,
> Reflecting in a watery mirror
> A glare that is blindness in the early afternoon.

Both Gascoyne and Eliot are concerned to seek out the spiritual sense of things, and with light itself.

Derek Stanford finds in Gascoyne's verse 'a certain antinomian imagery; pictures of revolt and sensual debauch and homosexuality,' which he reads as 'confessions'.[183] Stephen Romer, as I have indicated, refers to the 'homoerotic imagery' of this 'Metaphysical' section, but it might be more appropriate to point to the androgynous nature of the sexuality in several of Gascoyne's poems, notably 'Legendary Fragment', 'Eve', 'Venus Androgyne' and the unpublished 'Dark Fidelity' and 'Post-Mortem'[184] where the influence of Jouve is patently apparent, as it is in 'Amor Fati'. In the last paragraph of 'The Unconscious, Spirituality, Catastrophe', Jouve addresses the poet's mission: 'We who are poets, therefore, must labour to bring forth, out of such base or precious substances as are derived from man's humble, beautiful, erotic forces, the "bloody sweat" of sublimation' *GUSC*, p.114). A.T. Tolley argues that this makes 'a connection between Freudianism and Christianity that was evidently a valuable example to Gascoyne in the crisis that followed his abandonment of Surrealism in the thirties' (*ATTPF*, p.142). The amalgam of mysticism and eroticism in Jouve was nurtured by the

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[183] *The Freedom of Poetry* (Falcon Press, 1947), p.63. Further citings as (*TFP*).

[184] 'Dark Fidelity' (See **Appendix 2F**) was, as Gascoyne told me, 'written under the influence of Jouve', as was 'Post-Mortem' at which he grimaced in distaste when I showed him it.

influence of his readings of Baudelaire and Rimbaud, together with the Christian Mystics and Freud.

Gascoyne points out to Rémy that 'Legendary Fragment' is 'a mixture of the kind of mysticism and sexuality that recurs sometimes in my poetry'. Of 'Eve' and 'Venus Androgyne' he says: 'I think that these texts must have helped me express my nature which is deeply bi-sexual'. Gascoyne's own views on his sexuality are expressed in the *Collected Journals* in a long entry in 1938 following several sessions of psychoanalysis with Blanche Reverchon, Jouve's wife,[185] but he had previously attempted a case history headed 'Myself', dated 18th January 1937, that remained unpublished until my edition of ***April*** included this psychic profile in the Appendix.[186]

As for 'Amor Fati', 'a poem about lust' according to Cyril Connolly,[187] Gascoyne recalls that 'the title must derive from my reading of Fondane, then probably from Chestov'. It relates to 'the need to submit oneself to destiny, to one's own destiny, the

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[185] In 1934 he had been fully aware that his 'sexual preferences were fundamentally ambiguous' (*CJS, Afterword*, p.346). On 31.X.38, at 6.30 p.m. having just been to analysis with Blanche Reverchon, he decides to jot down a few notes about sex: 'At one time I told myself I was "bisexual", and seemed unable to make up my mind as to whether I was attracted by women or not'. However, having spent more than a year in Paris, he realizes that 'I have never in my life had any genuine, unmistakable sensual feelings about a woman; whereas I know by long experience that I can be physically attracted by men, that to make love with a man can give me great physical pleasure and emotional release. It no longer seems possible for me to make any reservations about accepting to be a homosexual' (*CJS*, p.203).

[186] Sex. Generally speaking, I find a physical relationship with women very difficult, for reasons of which I think I am already aware. Falling in love with or forming a mental (Platonic) attachment for a woman is almost always followed by an almost entirely physical relationship with, or at least attraction towards, a man. Both things seem to correspond to a definite need of my nature. In relationships with women, I gradually feel a need for physical expression also, and come up against a check; in my relationships with men, I find it difficult to develop the other side. I very much dislike physically effeminate men, and physically masculine women. From men I definitely get strong sensual stimulus; from women, very little, though I get strong imaginative and 'spiritual' stimulus from them. Physically, I tend to be active towards women, passive towards men. On the whole, it cannot be said that a physical relationship with either sex, though more successful with men, is altogether satisfactory.

I am also a narcissist, though this is not nearly so strongly marked as it once was. Earliest sexual memories are (a) narcissist, (b) homosexual. Both occurred somewhere about the age of four or five. First conscious sexual experiences homosexual, twelve to thirteen. First sexual attraction to opposite sex, seventeen, thwarted; first genuine physical experience of opposite sex, nineteen, unsatisfactory. I am by no means unattracted to women, and would certainly be capable of completely satisfying normal experience, if once I could get rid of certain inhibitions. These inhibitions seem to be connected with the castration-complex. I have only gradually become aware of them, and have certainly never had a conscious fear of castration. I seem to be unconsciously afraid of what women might do to me if I abandoned myself to them completely. See ***April: a Novella*** [1937], edited and introduced by Roger Scott (Enitharmon Press, 2000), pp.111-112.

[187] An extract from a review of Gascoyne's poetry, in incomplete form, which I found in a folder in the Berg Collection in New York Public Library.

idea that each of us must accept his own sexuality. I admit that this doesn't represent a very optimistic view of sexuality' (*DGUI*, pp.126-7). The poem describes graphically that moment in lovemaking when, for the speaker, 'blood's/ Lust has attained its whitest glow!' But after ejaculation, he implores:

> Do not break
> That vacuum out of which our silence speaks
> Of its sad speechless fury to the star
> Whose glitter scars
> The heavy heaven under which we lie
> And injure one another O incurably.

Terence Tiller, providing a contemporary response, quotes these same lines and comments on their impact, moving beyond the purely sexual aspect: 'And so we meet that cosmic pity which is another powerful element in his work: pity for the self-imposed or Fate-imposed agony of the human race, pity for the spiritual blindness and circumscription which so oppress him in himself; pity for minds struggling with the great enigmas of living' (*TTG*, p.5).

The 'inward eye' and the cosmic vision to which Tiller refers are present, too, in 'The Fortress'. Here, the opening lines seem to offer an out-of-body experience, as if presented by a filmmaker where the lens is that of the human eye and of the camera tracking through space, then disconcertingly zooming in close on the physicality of the human body:

> The socket-free lone visionary eye,
> Soaring reflectively
> Through regions sealed from macrocosmic light
> By inner sky's impenetrable shell,
> Often is able to descry
>
> Beyond the abdominal range's hairless hills ...

Gascoyne points us to 'The calm lymphatic sea/Laving the wound of birth', then to 'A heaving fortress built up like a breast/Exposed like a huge breast high on its rock'. He told Rémy: 'This is a text on the subject of Eros and Thanatos' (*DGUI*, p.125). The last stanza closes with lines that recall the gaze of Coleridge's Ancient Mariner:

> The shock
> Of vision stuns the hovering eye, which cannot see

What caverns of deep blood those white walls hide,
Concealing ever rampant underneath
The dark chimera Death-in-Life
Defending Life from death.

'Insurrection' may seem even more overtly millenarian in spirit and conception than 'Mountains':

Turbulence, uproar, echo of a War
Beyond our frontier: burning, blood and black
Impenetrable smoke that only blast
Of Archangelic trumpet could transpierce!

but Stanford rightly indicates how, at the same time, this poem can be seen to address the 'unleashing of the libido'(*TFP*, p.63), and the following lines illustrate this clearly:

What savagery
And what inhuman crime,
What odour of hot iron, nocturnal flesh
Of sexual animal these uncouth cries invoke!

By the end of the poem, 'Infernal armies' have been mobilised to 'avenge/The too-long-suffered tyranny and/Celebrated scandal of man's life'.

Gascoyne 'moves continually in a world filled with mysterious presences and mythical figures,' writes John Press, 'and nowhere more effectively than in "Eve"' (*JPDG*, p.189). The focus initially is on her mouth and hair:

Profound the radiance issuing
From the all-inhaling mouth among
The blonde and stifling hair which falls
In heavy rivers from the high-crowned head...

Then the poem vibrates unmistakably with sexual heat: 'While in the tension of her heat and light/The upward creeping blood whispers her name'; it ends with a direct reference to the Fall in the Garden of Eden: '*Insurgent*, wounded and *avenging one* [my emphases]/ In whose black sex/Our ancient culpability like a pearl is set'. There is, perhaps, in the speaker's tone, a residue of Gascoyne's inhibitions and unconscious fear of women to which he admitted in his 'free association' exercise on 18th January 1937. 'Legendary Fragment' begins:

> Below, in the dark midst, the opened thighs
> Gave up their mystery. Myrrh, cassia
> And spikenard obscurely emanated from
> The inmost blackness

as the speaker attempts through an imaginative leap to address the issue of female sexuality of which he has no experience. 'Venus Androgyne' confronts head-on the subject of sexual ambivalence:[188]

> [...] see: the blasphemy of flesh!
> The breast is female, groin and fist are male,
> But the red sphinx is hidden underneath the
> Weed-rank hair: muscle and grain
> Of man inextricably twined
> With woman's beauty.

The final line delivers an exhortation to resolve this sexual fix:

> With agony atone
> For such abhorrent heresy of seed,
> And weld twin contradictions in a single fire.

In 'The Fault', the line 'the condemned condition of our blood', refers to the Fall and the notion of Original Sin, and Gascoyne's comments to Arta Lucescu-Boutcher are illuminating: 'The theme of the Garden of Eden and the Fall of Man, the nostalgia of the origins, is the fundamental theme of European literature [...]. The Garden of Eden is just a symbol for the pure state' (*ALBI*, p.8).[189] Earlier in that interview, he had remarked:

> To me, man and God are one; man and God were one; the source of being. And religion is turning back to this source. After the disaster which man called 'la chute' – the Fall, this pure being (that is, man and God together) no longer existed. Religion is thus binding back to the pure being (p.3).

He explains that 'When we refer to Original Sin we are referring to the idea of breaking away from the source of being. The word "sin" means "separation" – which is the result of breaking away' (Ibid.).

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[188] Gascoyne told Rémy that the myth of Androgyne is 'one of the poles of Surrealism' (*DGUI*, p.126)

[189] He commented that 'Shestov's [sic] criticism of Martin Buber was that he did not believe in Original Sin. That is his great weakness. I admire Buber a lot and I have read all his books, and I went to many of his lectures' (*ALBI*, p.3). He twice heard Buber speak in London, and his *I & Thou*, which Gascoyne read and re-read, influenced him profoundly.

The opening lines, with their word-play and the internal rhyme in the second, 'To live, and to respire/And to aspire, to feel the fire', lead to an acknowledgement of mankind's awareness of 'how a wound like a black flower,/Exquisite and irreparable, can break/Apart in the immortal in us'. Neville Braybrooke finds that 'Poem after poem is written in the knowledge of man's ancient culpability, brought about by the Fall [...]. There is nothing sentimental about Gascoyne's vision' (*NBPS*).

'To Benjamin Fondane' (later 'I.M. Benjamin Fondane') was written in England, says Gascoyne, 'shortly before Benjamin Fondane was arrested by the Nazis and taken to Birkenau where he was gassed. It is thus, a premonitory poem because I didn't learn of Fondane's death until after the war' (*DGUI*, p.125). This is a fourteen-line poem which is not structured as a sonnet: its form is irregular, with long lines of ten, eleven, twelve and fourteen syllables, and short lines of three, four and eight syllables. Nevertheless, it resonates with feeling and urgency, and reflects perhaps unconsciously, Gascoyne's response to Fondane: 'He is a writer who lit his ideas and was excited about them' (*ALBI*, p.2). Gascoyne foregrounds the 'uncertainty' of the philosophical quest for 'the desired/Sweet spiritual spring'[190] which is 'unfound' and '[...] lost in the essential blue/Of space, among the rock and snow, the locked/Domain the instinct asks for'. It is only 'the inspired and the unchained and the endowed of desperate grace' who shall attain 'by violence' the Kingdom of God,[191] not those who do not acknowledge 'the great thirst of despair', nor those who 'quench their thirst in death'. The poet commented that

> Fondane was hostile to any fixed ideas; he always wanted to question everything. The state of certainty of which I speak at the end of the poem, is that of serenity, not a state of total immobility, but of accepting things as they are, of the necessity of evil if, on the other hand, there is God – 'to care and not to care' Eliot would say – the idea of a paradise where everything is marvellous, is intolerable and would be a veritable source of boredom (*DGUI*, pp.125-6).

Poems like 'I.M. Benjamin Fondane', together with 'The Fault', 'Mountains' and 'The Fortress', play on the divisions between God and the world, the cosmic and the terrestrial,

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[190] 'The Surrealists rejected the idea of the spirit,' he said to Lucescu-Boutcher (*ALBI*, p.5). 'Both Shestov [sic] and Fondane were concerned with spirituality.' (p.7). '[They] were fighting [...] to create a new belief [...]. Fondane was striving to acknowledge Surreality plus a spiritual reality' (p.5).

[191] The poem ends on a note of hope: Gascoyne told Duclos that 'One can't write poetry if one is a complete pessimist' (*MDI*, p.39).

the world and man, the spirit and the flesh, offering a vision of the universe based on two opposing principles: the forces of darkness (and the Void) and those of light.

'Artist' (later 'Philosophical Artisan') was based on a dream. 'The sense of the word "artist" here,' says Gascoyne, 'is that which is used in alchemy, that is, the author of the Work. The text was written the day after these dream visions, each of which served as a basis for the successive fragments of the poem. I tried to reproduce as faithfully as possible the way the episodes unfolded and linked together' (*DGUI*, p.126). The first six lines are filled with horrifying images of violence: 'crushed within a vice'; 'By a brand burnt'; 'wounded by/More keen a rustless blade'; 'The voice/Of prophecy destroys the speaker'. We are not so far removed from the cruel fate of another 'artist', Orpheus. The scene changes to stony tablelands, 'bleak/As a scraped bone'. Here, the protagonist faces defeat at the hands of his enemy's armies, 'In coiling ranks around his feet'. The host can only be held at bay by 'offering your flesh/As sacrifice to the Void's mouth in your own breast'.

'The Three Stars: A Prophecy' and 'Epode' (initially 'The Prophetic Mouth') are termed 'crisis poems', written like 'Artist' on 11.IX.39 (*CJS*, 272). According to the poet, 'The Three Stars' 'refers to the Three Wise Men, but more than anything, it represents the very simple application of dialectic in a spiritual sense' (*DGUI*, p.128). The opening has the resonance of myth and recounts the time when

> the reflection ceased
> to flow like unseen life-blood in between
> The night's tenebral mirror and the lunar light,
> Exchanging meaning. Anguish like a crack
> Ran with its ruin from the fulfilled Past
> Towards the Future's emptiness; and *black*
> Invading all the prism, became absolute.

But three white stars fell 'out of some uncharted spaceless sky' and 'Negation's spell' was broken by 'an unhoped-for miracle'. The poem ends with a positive vision of the third star which will 'henceforward burn/Through all dark still to come' and guide mankind

towards 'that Bethlehem beyond despair/Where from the womb of Nothing shall be born/A son'.[192] *Creatio ex nihilo.*

As for 'Epode', Gascoyne does not recall precisely what 'gave birth to this image, but the main theme is certainly that of the oracle which etymologically comes from the mouth. But I also had in mind the enormous statue of Pharoah or a photograph of Memnon, or even the immense statue commissioned by Rameses II in Shelley's poem "Ozymandias"' (*DGUI*, p.128). In addition, there is in mythology the figure of Cronos-Saturn whose mouth devours his own children yet also represents time itself. In 'Epode' the 'sacred Mouth' revealed

> During that moment's timeless flash
> The Wordless Meaning of the Whole
> (Which may be spoken by no man)
> Through the unearthly brilliance of its smile...
>
> While the old world's last bonfires turned to ash.

Clearly there is a connection here with Gascoyne's reference in the Lucien Jenkins interview to 'la bouche d'ombre' and the notion of 'the poet as a mask through whom words from beyond come'.[193]

I have already remarked on Gascoyne's emphasis on the auditory quality of his verse, on the significance of sound – or absence of it, not least in my commentary on 'Elsewhere' and 'Concert of Angels', unaccountably omitted from ***Poems 1937-42***. More specifically, in both those important poems as I have shown, and in several others in Section II, there are references to music which has always been as important to Gascoyne, as it was to T.S. Eliot and Jouve, its influence palpable in the poetry.[194] The title of the poem 'Cavatina' comes from one of the last of Beethoven's quartets, opus 129 (*DGUI*,

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[192] The tone of the final three lines is so different from that of the ending of Yeats's 'prophetic' poem, 'The Second Coming'.

[193] *Stand Magazine*, Vol.33, no.2 (spring 1992), p.21.

[194] Gascoyne's piece, 'How I came to music' appeared in Miron Grindea's *Adam International Review*, no.337-339 in 1970, pp.23-5. The same issue included 'Three Verbal Sonatinas' by Gascoyne, a poem in three parts: I. (Ibero-African Influence); II. (Neo-Classical Influence); III. (Atonal Influence) dedicated to Humphrey Searle who composed the music for Gascoyne's radiophonic poem ***Night Thoughts***, and some short pieces to accompany the poet's broadcast reading of Wallace Stevens's *The Man with a Blue Guitar*.

p.126), and includes the lines, 'Yet through disaster a faint melody/Insists', and 'Its force like violins in pure lament/Persists'. In 'Winter Garden', 'Pure music is the cry that tears/The birdless branches in the wind'; and in 'Insurrection', it is only the 'blast of Arcangelic trumpet' that could transpierce 'burning, blood and black/Impenetrable smoke'. 'The angel whose dark wind/Of wings and trumpet lips/Stirs [...]' appears in 'The Open Tomb'. 'Mozart: Sursum Corda' (dedicated to the South African composer Priaulx Rainier whom Gascoyne met in Paris in the 1930s when she was studying under Nadia Boulanger) sets 'supernal voices' in 'the sostenuto of the sky' against 'mortal deafness', and ends with these beautiful lines corresponding to the imagery of the Metaphysical poets: 'Beyond our speech/To tell what equinoxes of the infinite/The spirit ranges in its rare utmost flight'. At the same time, it is difficult not to see here an echo of Jouve in his poem, 'Mozart' in *Les Noces* (1931). For Jouve, 'The only human parallel to this rarified emotion [the particular joy of spiritual illumination] is [...] the music of Mozart,' records Callender, 'and he sees in its "divine gaîté" a purity that raises it on another plane from our own, [stressing] the uniqueness of the music' (*MCPJJ*, pp.86-7).

* * *

Between 1935 and 1939, Jouve wrote several articles on musical subjects, such as Mozart, Bartok, and Alban Berg. Gascoyne's translation of one of these essays, 'The Present Greatness of Mozart', appeared in *Horizon* in 1940, and he contributed four versions of poems by Jouve on Mozart to *Adam International Review* in 1980.[195] Gascoyne has told me that one of the strongest links in his relationship with Jouve was their shared passion for the music of Berg who died in 1935. Jouve devoted a poem to the composer in his collection *La Vierge de Paris* in 1944, and in 1953 he published with Michel Fano a study of Berg's opera *Wozzeck.* 'It is in Alban Berg that Jouve discovered the musician to whose technique he felt most attuned,' writes Margaret Callender. She adds that he 'was always impressed by the reconciliatory quality of Berg's music' (*MCPJJ*, p.281).

[195] *Horizon*, Vol.1, no.2 (February 1940), pp.84-94. *Adam*, nos.222-224, (1980), pp.48-49: 'Tempo di Mozart', 'Viaticum', 'In the Common Grave', 'Don Juan'.

The third and central Section III of ***Poems 1937-42*** is occupied by 'Strophes Elégiaques á la mémoire d'Alban Berg', originally written in English in the summer of 1936, not long after Berg's death, in two unpublished versions, which he found 'unsatisfactory'[196] Gascoyne began a translation into French just before the outbreak of the war: the MS is dated 'Eté 1939', following his return from Paris in March to his parents' home, and it was published the following year in *Cahiers du Sud* (Marseilles).[197] Why he chose to return to the abandoned project some three years later and then composed the long poem in French, is difficult now to ascertain.[198] It could be argued that, given Gascoyne's truly European sensibility, he chose to put into practice his understanding of French *poésie* as distinct from the English word 'poetry'.[199] What does seem incontrovertible is the elegiac mood; but instead of maintaining the initial focus on Berg and his music and their significance for the poet, the 'Strophes Elégiaques' open out in section two to engage with the *Zeitgeist* defined by the palpable threat of war, and the notion of mankind hellbent on a collision course with catastrophe. Three of the subtitles for the five sections are, Gascoyne explains, 'borrowed from movements of the composer's *Lyric Suite* for String Quartet' (*DGGS*, p.114). These are 'Andante Amoroso' (first section), 'Tenebroso' (the second), and 'Misterioso' (the fourth); the third and fifth are entitled 'Intermezzo' and 'Epilogue'.[200] Sutherland's illustration in Gascoyne's

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[196] The earlier version is in a notebook in the British Library and the second in the Berg Collection in New York Public Library (See **Appendix 2G**).

[197] No.220 (janvier 1940), pp.49-52.

[198] When I put this question to him during our telephone conversation on his 85th birthday, 10th October 2001, he answered straight away: 'Because there were things that I wanted to say in French at that time'. He agreed that there might have been something in my suggestion that there was, too, the feeling that nothing would ever be the same again, after Berg's death and in view of the threat of imminent, catastrophic conflict because of the deterioration in international relations on the Continent.

In a letter dated 22/2/02, Michael Hamburger suggests that in Gascoyne's case, the struggle 'to incorporate the whole of a truth in poems [...] was exacerbated by the pull between French and English exemplars. This, I think, is why he re-wrote the Berg poem in French. [...]. In his English poems there was a tension between traditional rhetoric (and rhythms or metres) and the colloquialism established by his immediate predecessors, Auden and the rest. Although Verlaine thought he had wrung the neck of rhetoric in French the rhetoric re-asserted itself even in Surrealism and all the other modernisms. [...] Somehow French is a more abstract language than English; therefore perhaps more congenial to David in his search for transcendent spirituality'.

[199] Paraphrasing Yves Bonnefoy, Michael Hamburger points to 'the "semi-transparency" of French words, their tendency to convey not the particularity of things but their idea or essence'. Much of this kind of poetry 'does not enact recognizable lived experience at all, but connections or disjunctions between words or small groups of words that float in a void of blank spaces on the page'. See 'Poésie, Poetry' in *Testimonies* (Carcanet, 1989), p.66.

[200] Berg's six movements are: 'Allegretto giovale', 'Andante amoroso', subtitled 'trio estatico', 'Allegro misterioso' (subtitled 'trio estatico') , 'Adagio appassionato', 'Presto delirando' (subtitled 'Tenebroso'), and 'Largo desolato', which denote successive psychological states.

description, 'portrays, in the lower third of the page, a shrouded reclining figure, "watchful in the grave of time..."'. Above him are placed two apparently fractured stones, the one on the left inscribed with the word "Elegiac". Above them float a number of curved black and grey forms that cannot be specifically identified' (*DGGS*, p.114).

Stanford suggests that 'for Gascoyne, the work of this composer appears as a reservoir which contains the *lacrimae rerum* of the age; and in response, as it were, to this musician, the opening poem [i.e. section one], "Andante Amoroso", creates, with broad strokes of unrestricted brush work, a scene that is plangent with melancholy' (*TFP*, pp.65-6). Stanford's reference to the painterly quality of these verses is apt: there are echoes of Gascoyne's fascination with John Gould Fletcher's literary impressionism, his word-paintings of gardens in the rain, of a scene imbued with an autumnal mood, as reflected in several of the verses in ***Roman Balcony and other poems***. The poetic world created in that collection projects a distinct awareness of the sadness implicit in the process of transition, denoting the end of a season - or of an era: here it is the summer of 1939 with all that implies. As the musical term 'andante' signifies, this section moves with a moderately slow and even expression, though not without some jarring images. The first stanza identifies its theme: 'Souvenir d'un musicien', his 'cordes lyriques'; and in long, rhythmical lines of ten, eleven or twelve syllables,[201] sound dominates:

> l'ouïe est entrainée
> Parmi des perspectives dissolvantes où son élégie
> Fleurit comme une couronne qu'arrosent des pleurs
> Des sons:[202]

The effects of the music on the listener are the subject of the second stanza, where the influence of Verlaine, which Gascoyne acknowledged in our discussion of ***Roman Balcony*** is again manifestly apparent in lines like: 'Sa musique est une pluie qui rafraîchit/Les cyprès seuls parmis ces rochers gris'.[203] Above all, Verlaine's concern with mood chimes with the intensity of the emotional atmosphere generated by Berg's music, not least in the *Lulu* and *Lyric Suites*. I find Clive Scott's characterization of the French

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[201] There seems to be no systematic attempt to write in French alexandrines, typically 12 syllable lines with a caesura. The only 3 lines which employ a caesura are of 11, 12 and 9 syllables.

[202] 'The memory of a musician' and 'his lyrical chords'. 'Hearing is carried/amongst dissolving perspectives where his elegy/flowers like a wreath that celebrates tears of sounds'(literal translation).

[203] 'His music is a rain that refreshes/the lone cypresses amongst these grey rocks'.

poet's style particularly apposite in relation to this first section and Gascoyne's technique here: 'His poetry veers between the most delicately musical tone and the prosy, which weds lyric indulgence in evanescent moods of disquiet and vague loss'.[204] For Gascoyne, the rain 'Trouble comme l'amour dans la mémoire les airs/Du soir'; 'Figures du passé, glissent comme des têtes coupées/Sur les courants du crépuscule lointain/De Cimmérie, refuge des ombres perdues./L'illusion tremble.'[205] Two quasi-Surrealist images compete jarringly with the mellifluous tone in the long lines of mainly ten, eleven or twelve syllables: 'des têtes coupées', quoted above, and 'le vent agite des roseaux dissonants;/Des vagues concentriques frappent le bord de l'eau/Comme les échos d'un cri désespéré'.[206]

The second section, 'Tenebroso', looks once more to elements of the landscape: 'Les grandes plaines où les routes sont comme des veines,/Les rangs de montagnes et les lacs réfléchissants,/Même les prairies les plus vides ou fleuries',[207] which must bear the weight of the enormous shadow of the *Zeitgeist*, 'qui menace/Avec ses nuages noirs de sort solides/Toutes les moissons'.[208] At this moment in history the seasons only serve to illustrate the phases of human conflicts. Here there is no causal connection with the death four years earlier of the composer. It is concern for the inevitable loss of what we value most in the present, as we rush headlong, dreams ruined, hopes unsustainable, 'towards the end of our suffering'. The image in stanza three is that of the thunderous din of a 'mad train' hurtling to derailment in one's head.[209] Again, the visuality of the verse is unmistakable: looking down, the speaker sees the darkness of the skies weighing like a judgement on the great cities of the Continent, on all the 'rues-prisons' ('prison-streets') where

> Rôdent encore les peurs de l'ancienne nuit
> Avec des uniformes, des bâtons, des fusils,
> Et où la folie couve ses fantasies

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[204] His entry, 'Paul Verlaine', in *Makers of Nineteenth Century Culture 1800-1914*, ed. Justin Wintle (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), p.650).

[205] 'The rain disturbs like love in one's memory the evening breeze'; 'Figures from the past glide like cut off heads/on the currents of the distant twilight/of Cimmeria, refuge of lost shades/Illusion trembles'.

[206] 'The wind shakes discordant reeds;/concentric waves slap the water's edge/like the echoes of a desperate cry'.

[207] 'The great plains where the roads are like veins,/the mountain ranges and the reflecting lakes,/even the emptiest or most flowery meadows'.

[208] 'that threatens/with its solid black clouds/all the harvests'.

[209] 'Quel signe pourrait empêcher tout espoir comme un train fou/De se dérailler dans la tête de l'homme'.

De persecutés, d'espions, d'élus de Dieu'.[210]

In section three, 'Intermezzo', Gascoyne returns to Berg's music and to music in general. There are many references: 'Tout chant est triomphe et toute plainte/Est réconciliation' ('Each song is triumph and each complaint/is reconciliation'); in the invocation 'Brûle encore,/Brûle, O lyre du larynx' ('Burn still,/Burn, O lyre of the larynx'); in the lines, 'Plongez-vous dans la mélodie, O ailes sonores/A la recherche de repos et de paix' ('Plunge into melody, O sonorous wings/searching for peace and repose'); in

Toute plainte est réconciliation
Avec la lamentable, et sait résoudre
Les pleurs et les ruines, la maladie
Des empires, dans des arabesques
De cancéreuse corruption et de pluie
D'étincelante semence stérile ...[211]

The imagery of the last two lines quoted above has a quasi-Surrealist flavour. Gascoyne then introduces two lines from Baudelaire's poem, 'Le Vin', set to music in Stefan George's German translation by Berg in his *Der Wein*: 'Les sons d'une musique énervante et câline/Semblable au cri lointain de l'humaine douleur' ('the sound of an enervating and caressing music,/like the distant cry of human sorrow'). It is just such a music that can console us in our human condition of damnation, 'the secret wound'.

The mood of the fourth section, 'Misterioso', remains sombre as the requiem, which unknown events must interrupt, hurries towards its ending:

Prémonitoires de la rupture les cordes forcées
A travers tous les tons par le vent rude
De l'angoisse! Et répétition de pressentiments
Interieures:[212]

In the following stanza there are references to Jouve's verse in 'telle la fumée/Qui accompagne la Bête hors de l'abîme, l'agneau/Meurtri, et ces chevaliers aux quatre

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[210] 'Where the fears of ancient night still roam/with uniforms, sticks, rifles, and where madness nurtures its fantasies/of the persecuted, of spies, of God's chosen ones'.

[211] 'Each complaint is reconciliation/With the lamentable, and can resolve/the tears and the ruins, the sickness/of empires, into arabesques/of cancerous corruption and rain of sparkling sterile seed...'

[212] 'premonitory of breakdowns the chords forced/ by the harsh wind through all the tones/of anguish! and repetition of foreboding...'

couleurs criantes' ('like the smoke/that accompanies the Beast out of the Abyss, the wounded/lamb, and these horsemen of four glaring colours'). But as these visions, 'these distorted images', fade at last, what is left is 'the dreadful nakedness of tragic man divided in himself' who must 'fall in shadows of myth to find his Christ again'.[213] It is at this point that a direct link is made with the preoccupations of the poems in the *Miserere* sequence.

In 'Epilogue: 1939', the final section, Gascoyne opens up the poem again to confront the present political situation in a Europe on the brink of war. Here is a society where 'Les vrais témoins ne sont plus aujourd'hui/Ecoutés, le silence les cache' ('True witnesses are no longer heard today/silence hides them'). He deliberately employs the German *Verboten* in the context of 'barbarous browns and blacks'. It is a time when the streets of Vienna, Salzburg, Prague, 'glorious cities of music and art' have been invaded by thousands of feet shod with iron; a time when 'the hideous spider's webs of the swastika hangs everywhere'. However, this powerful and emotive epilogue closes on a note of hope, as does 'Ecce Homo':

> Mais hors de l'avenir quel orage effrayant
> Va effacer leurs dernières traces avec ses foudres!
> Les vrais témoins nous resteront toujours.[214]

The final line of the poem links Gascoyne's search for poetic truth with Berg who, 'in his brilliant lyrical style, creates a seduction of which few musicians are capable. [...] the seduction by true means and to a true end, the seduction to truth itself'.[215]

* * *

[213] 'des images deformées'. 'La révélation de la nudité affreuse/De l'homme tragique divisé en lui-même [...] tomber/Dans les ténèbres du mythe pour retrouver son Christ'.

[214] 'But what a terrifying storm coming out of the future/will wipe out with its lightning the last traces of them! The true witnesses remain with us always'.

[215] René Liebowitz, 'Innovation and Tradition in Contemporary Music, III. Alban Berg: Or the Seduction to Truth', *Horizon*, Vol.XVI, no. 91 (August 1947), p.152.

The '*Personal*' poems that make up section IV are introduced by Sutherland's 'striking amalgamation of horns and thorns with an amorphous human figure with arm raised as in quest,' writes Gascoyne. 'If thorns are a theme anticipating numerous future works,' he goes on, 'the standing forms of the twin monoliths which are the subject of the plate illustrating the concluding section, *Time and Place*, are to found in various forms in a great many later works [...] The poems of this last section reflect civilian experience of the early years of the war'. He finds an affinity in this last illustration with some of Paul Nash's wartime paintings: 'the chalky quality of a dead moon, the desolation of Nash's dead sea of crashed planes' (*DGGS*, pp.114-5).

The epigraph to the *Personal* poems comprises two quotations from Marcel Jouhandeau whose work had interested Gascoyne very much before the two writers met. 'He has written some beautiful texts, like *Jeunesse sous l'Occupation*, or *Monsieur Godeau Intime* which I associated then with the problem of the condition of the artist,' he told Rémy (*DGUI*, p.128).

'Sonnet: From Morn to Mourning' is the celebration, in a verse form rarely used by Gascoyne, of an idyllic natural world as the birds 'chant their aubade' under a 'sapphire dome' and its Sun of nascent ardour'. These pastoral images, representing an almost ecstatic non-awareness of anything but beauty, warmth, security and joy in creation, immediately recall the Blake of *Songs of Innocence*: 'rainbows dance/Above the mountain meadows wherein Love's/Flocks graze'. The line, 'Vision unfolds vibrating like a flower' is Surrealistic but does not jar, lending immediacy to the description of sounds and sensations which mediate initially an all-encompassing sense of harmony, as in 'Fête' in this section,[216] which is undercut by the drama of the last three lines:

> But what chill shadow, not of cloud,
> Is this that darkens noonday's crystal? Whence
> Comes that far wail of mourning through the groves?

Joy has turned to sorrow, foreboding and an awareness of man's culpability. As with Blake, the same poem gives contrary perceptions of the same scene or event, and the

[216] 'And the whole day/Drank in the fecund flowing of the sky' and 'Once more the earth, its buried spirit stirred,/Aspired towards the summer's splendid bursting/And an illustrious death'.

world of innocent delight gives way to the harsh reality of experience and of sin and corruption: a world of disjunction. The reader/listener is prepared for this subversion in the way that the rhythm is disturbed by caesuras in lines 1, 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, and by the deliberate use of half-rhyme: 'sun-stone', 'dome-come', 'eyes-flows', 'flower-lyre', 'dance-whence', 'Love's-groves'.

'The Fabulous Glass' is dedicated to Jouve's wife, Dr Blanche Reverchon, who was Gascoyne's analyst from October 1938. The poem 'represents a half-rhyming versification of a sequence of images that actually occurred to me during a psychoanalytic session with her in late 1938 and noted down immediately after'. There are four images: 'a Tree', 'A Centipede', 'A phosphorescent Triple Chain' and 'A Virgin and her Child' in line 13 which refers directly to a medieval statuette of the pair where the child's face is 'obliterated by an iconoclast or time'.[217] The Jouves treasured the piece which stood in a recess in the study next to the consulting room, and it inspired Jouve's collection *Vierge de Paris* (1939-44). In 'The Fabulous Glass', referring to the Virgin, Gascoyne writes: 'it was horrid to behold/How she consumed that Infant's face/With her voracious Mouth. Her dress/Was black and blotted all out'. Apart from the deliberate half-rhymes which echo the technique employed in the previous poem, what is notable here is the alchemical reference in the lines: 'A Peacock, which lit up the glass/By opening his Fan of Eyes'. Gascoyne acknowledged that the peacock comes from alchemy: 'I'm convinced that alchemical symbols are produced in the collective unconscious' (*DGUI*, p.128).

On 18th September 1938, Gascoyne sat for 'R.' for a couple of portrait-sketches, the second of which, 'bolder and more harsh in style, made me look like a Parisian *noctambule*', haunter of cafés, slightly '"diabolic", probably drugged: a vicious, androgynous face with enormous eyes and a sensual mouth' (*CJS*, p.181). 'Noctambules' (the MS is dated 28.V1.41) is dedicated to the American author of *Nightwood*, Djuna Barnes, whom Gascoyne knew through Antonia White and Peggy Guggenheim. The poem is an impressionistic word-painting which traces the denizens of the night as they move through a known, lived-in and atmospheric pre-war Paris, with its distinctive sounds, smells, the clientèle of bars, cafés, nightclubs, bathed in red or blue

[217] Gascoyne: 'Introductory Notes' to ***Collected Poems 1988***, pp. xvii-xviii). Further citings as (*INCP*).

neon lights, or the white glare of an arc light. There is weeping, a sigh, music playing, 'mingled voices', whispers, an accordion, the clink of ice in a highball glass, the wind, cries, faint footsteps, the clatter of litter bins, and the 'wheezing chimes' of Saint Sulpice. There are those with walk-on parts to play: 'a girl in tulle'; 'a young American intent/On finding a chance bedfellow'; 'An English drunkard'; 'a son-and-heir/Of riches and neurosis' who 'casts/His frail befuddled blonde/Brutally to the floor'. But the dominant, if Romantic, image that looms out of the shadows, the sounds and visions of the nocturnal metropolis is this:

> a boy
> With a white face that dreams
> Have drained of meaning writes
> The last page of a book
> Which none will understand.

Dawn slowly breaks: 'A rapid shiver runs/Throughout the still, grey, blind/Mass of the city'. Like Philippe Jaccottet, Gascoyne is fascinated by light; both are intensely aware of what John Le Carré has termed 'the religious light between dawn and morning'.[218] We recognize, now, the loneliness, the accidie, of the speaker who, as countless times before, 'makes his roomward way/Across that silent square', passing 'the snarling lions' in la place de Saint-Sulpice.[219] This is a nightly ritual:

> How timeless seems this time
> Of vigil in despair:
> Of night by night the same
> Weary anabasis
> Between two wars, towards
> The Future's huge abyss.

As daylight filters into the square, the reader is drawn into the Present of the poem and a world on the brink of the inescapable and the unknown. Gascoyne's acute sense of personal and historical crisis is tangible here.

Roger Roughton, Gascoyne's senior by one month, gassed himself in his birthplace, 'that sordid city', Dublin, in 1941. The much-anthologized 'An Elegy': R.R.

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[218] Quoted on the back cover of Derek Mahon's edition of *Philippe Jaccottet, Selected Poems* (Penguin Books, 1988).

[219] Gascoyne, today, sees a Freudian play on the notion of the angry father because the son arrives home so late. 'I think it was 5a.m.' he told Rémy (*DGUI*, pp.130-1).

1916-1941, written shortly after his suicide, is a measured, moving testament to their friendship and to a young man of genuine potential:

> Friend, whose unnatural early death
> In this year's cold, chaotic Spring
> Is like a clumsy wound that will not heal;
> What can I say to you, now that your ears
> Are stoppered-up with distant soil?

The adroit use of the colloquial 'stoppered-up' stresses for the speaker the 'unnaturalness' and the unbearable reality of his 'early death' as he visualises his friend as he last saw him alive, in the company of Sheila Legge in the early summer of 1939 (*CJS*, p.396). Gascoyne recalls 'the latent pathos' of Roughton's twenty-five 'living years - /Hurried, confused and unfulfilled - /That were the shiftless years of both our youths/Spent in the monstrous mountain-shadow of/*Catastrophe* that chilled you to the bone'. In 1932, at sixteen, Roughton had left school (where he was bullied like Gascoyne). They first met during the winter of 1933/4 in the famous left-wing Parton Street Bookshop in Holborn, London, where they were introduced by the proprietor David Archer. Shortly afterwards, Gascoyne visited Roughton in Hampstead where he was living with his half-sister, and his mother with whom relations were strained. Eventually Roughton moved to share Gascoyne's small flat in Southwark for a short period. In the summer of 1935 Roughton left for the USA with their mutual friend, the writer John Davenport. They visited New York and Staten Island, and drove to California where Roughton found work as a Hollywood extra. Towards the end of 1935, now a Communist Party member, he travelled to the USSR. In 1936, Roughton began publishing the review, *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* [220] to which Gascoyne contributed poems and his translations of French Surrealist poets. Despite his commitment, Roughton was unable to strike a literary and political balance; he had become disillusioned. In issue No.10 there was a terse announcement: 'The Editor is going abroad for some time'. This is the background to the opening lines of the elegy's fourth stanza: 'Sex, Art and Politics: those/Poor expedients!

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[220] There were ten numbers, 1-8 appeared monthly, 9-10 quarterly. The 'Surrealist Double Number' (May 1936) issued to coincide with the June opening of the International Surrealist Exhibition in London (Roughton submitted several objects), contained translations from Breton, Eluard, Char, Hugnet, Jarry, Péret, and poems by Gascoyne, Roughton, Humphrey Jennings and Kenneth Allott. The 'Picasso Poems Number' (4&5) preceded the magazine's 'Declaration on Spain' of November 1936, signed by the English Surrealist Group of which Roughton was a member from 1936-8, calling for 'Arms for the People of Spain!'. However, Roughton claimed in No.8 that his publication was 'in no way an official Surrealist magazine'.

You tried them each in turn'. Gascoyne has told me that Roughton loved fast cars like a Bugatti:

> I see your face in hostile sunlight, eyes
> Wrinkled against its glare, behind the glass
> Of a car's windscreen, while you seek to lose
> Yourself in swift devouring of white roads
> Unwinding across Europe or America.

He travelled to France, Munich and Czechoslovakia (driving a yellow Cord), returned to England, then left for Ireland in July 1939. Gascoyne stresses his friend's utter despair; he has told me that for Roughton the last straw was the betrayal of Czechoslovakia by Chamberlain's policy of appeasement: 'Seeing the world's damnation week by week/Grow more and more inevitable'. The closing lines of the sixth and last stanza refer to a Surrealist prose poem, 'The Journey', published by Roughton in his review,[221] in which a child journeys through a large park on the back of a huge Saint Bernard whose legs have been broken: 'that lonely child [...] was borne/Slowly away into the utmost dark'.

The epigraph for 'Snow in Europe', the first poem in the final section, *Time and Place*, is taken from Jouve: 'Au temps où la douceur/Est cruelle et le désespoir est brillant' ('At a time when sweetness/is cruel and hope is shining'). The time in question for Gascoyne was Christmas 1938. He and Denham Fouts, to whom he dedicated 'To A Contemporary',[222] were living in the rue de Bac in Mégève, 'during the winter that followed Munich; we realized that war was inevitable' (*DGUI*, p.131). The poem is structured in three stanzas each of five lines, and is unusual in Gascoyne's *oeuvre* because of the extensive use he makes of alliteration to illustrate the heavy snowfall by emphasizing the sibilants:

> Out of their slumber Europeans spun
> Dense dreams: appeasement, miracle, glimpsed flash
> Of a new golden era; but could not restrain
> The vertical white weight that fell last night

[221] No.8, December 1936, pp.152-54. Roughton's suicide helped fix his place in twentieth century English literature, frozen for all time into the reality - and the myth - of the writing and politics of the 1930s.

[222] They met for the first time at the lecture given at the Sorbonne by W.H. Auden. Gascoyne wrote in his journal: 31.X11.38 'There has been a lot of snow, but now it has all melted away. Have written a new poem [...]' (*CJS*, p.234).

> And made their continent a blank.
>
> Hush, says the sameness of the snow
> The Ural and the Jura now rejoin
> The furthest Arctic's desolation. All is one
> Sheer monotone: plain, mountain; country, town:
> Contours and boundaries no longer show.

The last three lines above invoke Joyce's description of the altered Irish landscape in the final paragraph of his story *The Dead*. In this visionary sequence, Gabriel's mind is on the brink of sleep, and the snow falls 'faintly through the universe [...] upon all the living and the dead' covering all things with a neutral whiteness. As in Gascoyne's poem, it erases all differentiating details, effaces frontiers with indifference. 'The mood of stunned but apprehensive relief which followed the signature of the Munich agreement,' writes James Reeves, 'is symbolized [in 'Snow in Europe'] by the continent-wide snowfall'.[223] In *The Dead*, the snow symbolizes the egotistical protagonist's accommodation with the world in a sense of total unity. 'Snow in Europe' has no such optimistic ending as the twenty-two year-old Gascoyne confronts a world menaced by war, soon to be overwhelmed by it, as the final lines of the poem, after the caesura, prophetically evoke a highly effective if understated vision of the cataclysm to come:

> Now midnight's icy zero feigns a truce
> Between the signs and seasons, and fades out
> All shots and cries. But when the great thaw comes,
> How red shall be the melting snow, how loud the drums?

Bernard Bergonzi notes here Gascoyne's 'awareness of the pressures of history and his adroit handling of images' (*BBCP*, p.407).

'Zero' (later 'Zero: September 1939') can be read with the journal entry for 1.1X.39:

> When reality is as painful as it is at this hour, how can the disillusioned few who are capable of seeing it hope to be able to make other men open their eyes to what they see. Is the 'ordinary man' even capable of a moral suffering great enough to force itself inescapably upon his consciousness and to make him admit its existence openly? (*CJS*, p.260).[224]

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[223] Reeves (ed.), *The Modern Poets' World* (London: Heinemann, 1957, 1959), p.112.

[224] There is an interesting note, unpublished, 'Theme for poem', which I found in an orange notebook, c.1950: '"When we dead awaken". The world has already ended. This is Zero. We live in a world of complacent living dead, to whom the summons to arouse, to rise from among the dead, ex nihilo, from the dust, the cry of the prophet in the valley of Jehosophat, is as a provocation to a lynching.' However,

It is interesting to compare the diction of the opening lines of the poem, in which Gascoyne employs a prison image and refers once more to 'the worst' with which mankind can be confronted. Again, the effects of 'the stunning blow struck by the horror of actuality' (*CJS*, 3.1X.39, p.262) are rendered by awkward half-rhymes and the use of the caesura:

> Who can by now not hear
> The hollow and annihilating roar
> Of final disillusion; or not know
> How our condition is uncertain and obscure
> And difficult to bear? Yet through
> The blackness of his dungeon there still peer
> Man's eyes, unmoving, lit by their desire
>
> To see *the worst*, and yet not die
> Of their lucid despair
> But in such vision persevere
> Through time into Eternity.
> For this is Zero-hour.

Following Jouve, Gascoyne employs the Spanish '*nada*' (the 'nothing' of the Spanish mystics, like St. John of the Cross) in the second stanza, linking the words 'zero', 'the Void' and 'Negation'. Two days later, he wrote: '*Zero is over.* [...] I feel today that midnight has struck and [...] the worst of the night is still to come [...]' (*CJS*, p.262).

'An Autumn Park', written a month later, is, in effect, Richmond Park which Gascoyne often crossed on his way back to Twickenham, not far from a house for disabled ex-servicemen from the First World War, where they made paper flowers (*DGUI*, p.131). The park, however, 'could be in any city,' comments Philip Gardner, 'in which Gascoyne apprehends "the true/And imminent glory breaking through man's circumstance"' (*PGDG*, p.145). 'Dark suffocates the world': the poem communicates the immediacy of life in wartime England, 'Outside our area of sand-bagged mansions and of tense/But inarticulate expectancy of roars, /The unhistoric park/Extends indifference through all its air'. The park represents an oasis of tranquillity for its visitors, it 'negates/With its consistently non-human peace/All the loud mind-polluted world outside its gates'. In the last stanza, there is, again, an echo of Blake and his longing to return to

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'zero' is used in a different sense, here, more in keeping with Eliot's vision of the living dead sleepwalking across London Bridge in *The Waste Land*, to which I have referred elsewhere.

that earlier Golden Age: 'Remembrance of the simpler earth that was/Our dwelling and contentment once, a chance/Of re-beholding that lost innocence'.

The speaker's insomnia in 'A Wartime Dawn' recalls Gascoyne's acknowledgement of his benzedrine addiction in the 'Afterword' to the ***Collected Journals 1936-42***, where he describes those '*White Nights*' when he stayed awake 'for nights on end during the feverish end of summer that preceded the final declaration of war against Hitler's Germany on September 3rd' (*CJS*, p.384). Earlier, on the same page, he writes: 'A poem of mine called 'A Wartime Dawn', dated April 1940,[225] would probably never have been written had I not by then already become an inveterate benzedrine user' (ibid.). The setting is his parents' house in Teddington.[226] What seems to be a precise, impressionistic account packed with adjectives of the sights, sounds and smells of life on the home front in wartime, - as in the following lines:

> Until a breeze
> From some pure Nowhere straying, stirs
> A pang of poignant odour from the earth, an unheard sigh
> Pregnant with sap's sweet tang and raw soil's fine
> Aroma, smell of stone, and acrid breath
> Of gravel puddles

or in 'White hollow clink of bottles, - dragging crunch/Of milk-cart wheels, - and presently a snatch/Of windy whistling as the newsboy's bike winds near', - is undercut by four arresting similes. These intensify not only the visuality of the scene, but also the reality of the speaker's agitated attempts to come to terms with the impossibility of sleep in competition with the visions in his head ('with a hollow skull/In which white vapours seem to reel/Among limp muddles of old thought'), and noises outside. In the first of five stanzas, 'eyes/Collapse into themselves like clams in mud' as he reaches out at last to switch on the light, having given up the unequal struggle. In stanza three he draws back the curtains, unpinning the black-out cloth, and sees 'Sky like the inside of a deaf-mute's mouth...' and 'Nearest within the window's sight, ash-pale/Against a cinder-coloured

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[225] Kenneth Allott selected this to represent Gascoyne's work in his anthology, *Contemporary Verse* (Penguin Books, 1950). He found no sense of strain in 'A Wartime Dawn': 'the quality of the "reporting" in this poem seems to me to be very fine' (p.247).

[226] He told Rémy :'In the garden there was a mulberry bush and beyond the garden extended a housing estate for the Shell Mex employees with houses completely white and lawns in front with a thick chain like a fence. Our house was very large because it was situated on a corner' (*DGUI*, p.131).

wall, the white/Pear-blossom hovers like a stare'. Bleary-eyed he looks directly at a single barrage-balloon hanging flaccidly, and 'An incommunicable desolation weighs/Like depths of stagnant water on this break of day'. The universality of the experience is encapsulated in the last line: 'And one more day of War starts everywhere'. Tiller rightly makes the general point that 'Gascoyne is very sharply and vividly aware of the contemporary world, the immediate landscape. His eye for detail is amazingly sharp' (*TTG*, p.7). Bergonzi comments: '"A Wartime Dawn" ends its painful evocation of insomnia with a sharp transition from personal sensations to the new collective experience of war' (*WAA*, pp.7-8). Philip Gardner brings out another aspect: 'Though full of minute and sometimes almost neurotic impressionism [...] the poem relates this, ultimately, to the atmosphere of an external, real world'. He goes on to make a telling point: 'This fine poem lacks, however, the quality of radiance – the ability to transcend the world without forgetting it – which is Gascoyne's particular hallmark in this volume. It is found – though to single out one poem from so many is invidious – in full measure in "The Gravel-Pit Field"' (*PGDG*, p.146).

The terrain described in this poem is in the suburbs of Teddington, and mentioned in a journal entry four years earlier.[227] Of all the drafts for published and unpublished poems (and translations) that I have examined in the notebooks in the British Library, this, in Add.56045, is the most assiduously worked over. Gascoyne hesitated over the choice of a title as the first page of the work sheets makes clear, under the heading 'Notes for a poem': 'The/A Wilderness'; 'Terrain Vague'; 'A/The Gravel-Pit'; 'Stones and Weeds'; Zone'; 'A Barren Acre'. Below this section, beneath a line drawn across the page, a second section lists the themes and ideas Gascoyne wishes to highlight and develop throughout the poem:

- demonic exhalation of sub-soil
- a Pharaoh's necklet
- dead grass white & black
- breath of the world's turning

- minutiae
- birds
- green, colour of hope
- far edge of existence,
  beyond names.

[227] 26.IV.37: 'We all went down to the weir the other night and sat on the island till two in the morning, talking and watching the moon scatter its light across the water – then withdraw behind a film of cloud. There was a mysterious fire blazing in the middle of the Ham gravel-pit fields on the other side of the river' (*CJS*, p.100).

The final section, at the bottom of the sheet appears to be the six-part structure of the poem he has in mind:

I. Field (1)
II. Pits (2)

III. Weeds, grass (3)

IV. Stones, (4) soil (3)
V. (Strength, durability, triumph
(of the utterly impoverished (4 & 5)) & despised
VI. (Peace; simile (?) – outside time (9)
(like helix at core of an
(idol's brow, Buddha. (9)

However, there is no exact link between the structure above and the first six of nine, nine-line stanzas, shown by Arabic numerals in brackets. It seems likely that as it was composed the poem developed in a more measured manner, and that the 'minutiae' were given due prominence to emphasize both the effect of the 'flash of insight' and the transforming power of the imagination.

As in 'A Wartime Dawn', the poet's approach here is that of close, detailed observation, with a preponderance of adjectives:

A stretch of scurfy pock-marked waste
Sprawls laggardly in acres till
They touch a raw brick-villa'd rim.

Amidst this nondescript terrain
Haphazardly the gravel-pits'
Rough-hewn rust-coloured hollows yawn.

While Gascoyne presents a precisely delineated picture of 'these intertwined minutiae/Of Nature's humblest growths', with what Gardner calls 'attentive, compassionate gravity' (*PGDG*, p.146), there is an unusually effective simile at the end of the second stanza: 'rain-/Water in turbid pools stagnates/Like scraps of sky decaying in/The sockets of a deadman's stare'. From the fourth stanza, there is a marked change of emphasis, which prepares the reader for the 'apotheosis' in the final lines. This meagre landscape has the potential to become something else, by alchemy, so that 'these least stones' seem 'Like rare stones such as could have formed/A necklet worn by the dead queen/Of a great Pharaoh, in her tomb'; so that 'each abandoned snail-shell strewn/Among these blotched dock-leaves might seem/ [...] like/Some priceless pearl-enamelled toy/Cushioned on green silk under glass'.

In the penultimate stanza, radiance from 'The zenith's stark light' bathes the land, piercing 'dusk's rolling vapours', and realization for the speaker is sudden as this wilderness is metamorphosed:

> and in a flash
> Of insight I behold the field's
> Apotheosis: No-man's land
> Between this world and the beyond,
> Remote from men and yet more real
> Than any human dwelling-place;
> A tabernacle where one stands
> As though within the empty space
> Round which revolves the Sage's Wheel.[228]

Glyn Pursglove's appreciation of this 'literally glorious poem' is particularly apposite, not least for its concision: 'a ravaged wartime landscape is transformed by the redemptive power of an imagination fed by spiritual awareness' (*GBCP*, p.331). 'The Gravel-Pit Field', the impact of which lasts long after a first, or second, reading, represents a notable example of the way in which Gascoyne's poetry remains within the orbit of the real even when he seems to be attempting to transcend the human element. For Heather Buck, this poem 'so successfully evokes the commonplace pervaded by the sacred'.[229]

Talking with Rémy about 'Farewell Chorus', Gascoyne remarks that 'The basic metaphor is that of the departing trains full of servicemen, but essentially it is, of course, a goodbye to the 1930s' (*DGUI*, p.131). Interestingly, Gardner draws a parallel with the elegy for Roughton, 'a similar retrospect given an edge of pathos' (*PGDG*, p.145). Janus-like, this long poem in three sections, each of five stanzas, looks back at the 'grim Thirties' - Auden's 'low dishonest decade' is rendered here[230] as 'those undermining years of angry waiting and cold tea', [...] 'the delusive peace of those disintegrating years' - and forward to the dangerous and uncertain future:

> Having left all false hopes behind, may we move on
> At a vertiginous unmeasured speed, beyond, beyond,
> Across this unknown Present's bleak and rocky plain;
> Through sudden tunnels;

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[228] 'Lao Tse's Wheel' in the 3rd impression of the collection (1948).
[229] Review of ***Collected Poems 1988*** in *Agenda*, Vol.26, no.4 (winter 1988), pp.63.
[230] On this point see Samuel Hynes, *The Auden Generation. Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s* (Faber 1976, 1979), pp.388-89.

directing our gaze to

> those nameless and unknown
> Extremes of our existence where fear's armour falls away
> And lamentation and defeat and pain
> Are all transfigured by acceptance; where men see
> The tragic splendour of their final destiny. [231]

He appropriates the 'frontier' image employed to such effect by Auden and his contemporaries: 'Nor may we return/Except in unimpassioned recollections from beyond/That ever nearer frontier that our fate has drawn'.

Grevel Lindop sees Gascoyne's war poems as 'powerful in their bleakness, confronting "The hollow and annihilating war/Of final disillusion" with "a lucid despair". They treat war,' he says, 'as a symptom of the spiritual void within man, something horrific yet wholly without drama or dignity'. He is confident that 'To help us make the [...] transition to the poetic climate of the 1940s, no poet could be more appropriate than David Gascoyne'. (*GLP*, p.29). While for Bergonzi ***Poems 1937-42*** 'remains one of the few distinguished collections of the decade' (*BBCP*, p.407), Philip Gardner quotes approvingly Stanford's contention that it represented 'the most significant recent work in verse, after Auden and *Four Quartets*' (*PGDG*, p.144). However, in a typically acerbic review of the collection in *Scrutiny*, Geoffrey Walton is curmudgeonly even in respect of those aspects he appreciates: 'With Mr. Gascoyne's work [...] one comes back to the more lyrical manner. He seems to be intent on restoring "the sublime in the old sense" [...] many of his poems are decidedly visionary and ill-organized'. The next sentence is intended to be an indictment: 'He writes with a dissociated sensibility', even though Walton is at pains to add, 'I'm not demanding that all poets should try to write like Mr. Eliot [...]'.[232] I take issue with this last point. It might be argued that in a number of poems (but certainly not in all) such as 'Sanctus', 'Ex Nihilo' and 'Ecce Homo', together with 'The Gravel Pit Field', 'Winter Garden' or 'Concert of Angels' (which was unaccountably omitted from the collection), Gascoyne does achieve a fusion of thought

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[231] Written at New Year 1940, and first published in *Partisan Review* (January-February, 1941), Vol.VIII, No.1, pp.20-3. Auden's poem 'September 1, 1939' is followed by Gascoyne's in Robin Skelton's anthology *Poetry of the Thirties* (Penguin Books, 1964), pp.280-87.

[232] Vol.XII, no.4 (autumn 1944), p.319.

and feeling, offering as a poet an example of *un*dissociated sensibility.[233] In addition, John Press believes that in poems such as 'Eve', 'The Fault' and the sequence *Miserere*, Gascoyne 'achieves an intensity and a purity of utterance that he has never surpassed and seldom equalled in his next collection' (*JPDG*, p.189). Tiller refers to 'the ecstasy, almost, to which he rises in his intensest moments. We have seen how often horror is his mood and theme; but his sense of lyrical beauty is just as powerful. Not that he is ever a merely decorative or lyrical poet – under the rhetoric of the lovely elaboration, the pursuit goes on' (*TTG*, p.7).

Cyril Connolly's response to the appearance of a third impression of ***Poems 1937-42*** provides a fitting *envoi* to this chapter: 'They take us in their chill, calm, sensitive language as near the edge of the precipice as a human being is able to go and still turn back,' he wrote in 1948.[234]

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[233] In his essay 'Eliot's Missing Lectures', Frank Kermode explains Eliot's argument that 'never having recovered from it [a vast spiritual catastrophe in the seventeenth century], we are condemned to think and feel by turns, for ever unable to synthesize disparate experience in language'. See *Pleasing Myself: from Beowulf to Philip Roth* (Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 2001), p.29.

[234] From an advertisement for the 3rd impression in *Horizon*, Vol.XVIII, No.103 (July 1948), quoted by Derek Stanford in a review of ***Poems 1937-42*** (3rd impression) in his article 'The Eagle, the Lion and the Fleur-de-Lys', in *Poetry Quarterly*, Vol.10, No.2 (Summer 1948), p.123.

5 A Vagrant and other poems & Encounter with Silence: Poems 1950

On the last day of April 1942, Gascoyne travelled by train through the Kentish landscape, the same area where Samuel Palmer spent his youth and painted 'the best and most personal of his early work' and, in what would be one of the final entries in his journal, he noted how 'everything painted itself on my sight with the vivid intensity of a rare vision'. The reader is immediately drawn back to the apotheosis of 'The Gravel-Pit Field': 'I do not remember ever having seen the English countryside transfigured by such perfect loveliness as this year's Spring has brought with it' (*CJS*, pp.332-3). The last entry, dated 8.V.42, *at home, (Teddington)*, records a visitation by 'my deeper – my 'true' – Self', and with it 'a sense of reawakened strength [...] like a wonderfully fresh, invigorating upland wind!' But in the next paragraph he feels impelled to ask, 'How can I hope that this vitality will outlast the few brief hours of its re-emergence?' How can he 'persevere through the present seemingly endless "bad lands" of barrenness and postponement...' (*CJS*, p.335)?

The war was now in its third year. Turned down to his surprise as medically unfit for military service, Gascoyne became a professional actor for two years as 'David Emery'. He worked in repertory theatre, touring the country,[1] and entertaining the troops, finally appearing in a West End production. Such activity enforced a diminution in 'sustained creative writing' (p.332) to follow the collection ***Poems 1937-42*** which was ready for publication, but he 'continued to write, however; and my poetry became almost exclusively "descriptive"'.[2] There were additional problems such as his persistent drug abuse at this time when amphetamine preparations were freely available in all chemists' shops. For a brief period, he was as he said some years later, 'under the unwise control of

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1 'The return of genuinely gifted demobilized young actors after the War meant that I was soon once more out of regular employment' (*INCP*, p.xix). During the war period, 'a very friendly' Louis MacNeice who was working at the BBC offered Gascoyne a part in one of his historical radio dramas. 'I had to make a speech and I was awful – and MacNeice was very disappointed'. In a telephone conversation with Gascoyne on his 85th birthday, 10th October 2001.

2 Gascoyne: 'Le Surréalisme et la Jeune Poésie Anglaise: Souvenirs de l'Avant-Guerre' in *Encrages*, numéro 6, été 1981 (Vincennes: Université de Paris III), p.20. Further citings as (*DGEN*).

a refugee doctor, but dangerously exceeded'[3] his prescribed doses. During the post-war years he became increasingly addicted. His life-long friend, Kathleen Raine, had met him again in wartime London, after his long absence in Paris, and was shocked by the change in the 'beautiful' young man she knew when he used to visit her husband, Charles Madge, and Humphrey Jennings in Blackheath: 'Now he looked racked, tormented, his large hands forever moving nervously, twisting a handkerchief, his deer-like eyes haunted; his teeth were decayed, his skin grey'.[4] Some time later, Gascoyne 'took refuge' with Raine for a while and he was then 'even more ill than he had been at the time of *Poetry London*. He used to say that it was as if his "brain leaked" (he later described it as "like a transistor set inside his head", on which all kinds of voices not his own spoke, wept, declaimed, argued, chanted; while others would say "we are the gods, the gods"'.[5] A visit to the Tavistock clinic was unsuccessful: the Freudian psychiatrist who interviewed him said, 'I'm afraid I can do nothing for you'. The note following the fragment of a projected poem, 'Silence in Heaven' which I found in a notebook in the Berg Collection in New York Public Library, indicates his continued mental instability: 'Poem sabotaged by demonic raving and impatience, 29.XII.52'.[6] In Notebook III, some passages written two years earlier are disturbing to read, revealing a tenuous hold on reality; it is as if the need to write and the practice of jotting (in a large, wandering and spidery hand) are barely enough to stave off mental collapse.[7]

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[3] Gascoyne: 'Confidential pharmaceutical information' in his contribution to *Adam International Review*, Vol.XXV, no.337-339 (1970), the issue devoted to 'Four Writers and Music', p.27. George Barker's signed copy of Gascoyne's ***The Sun at Midnight*** contains three notes to the text in Barker's hand. One of these identifies the 'refugee doctor' supplying the amphetamines as Dr Karl Theodore Bluth (Anna Kavan's friend and mentor). Instead of reducing his creative work, comments Barker, 'It had precisely the reverse effect on my own'.

[4] *The Land Unknown*, vol.2 of her autobiographical trilogy (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975), p.162. Further citings as (*TLU*).

[5] I found clear evidence of this is one of the notebooks in the British Library, (Add.56057, 1948), the unpublished poem, 'Yes, You!' (See **Appendix 2H**).

[6] Another, longer fragment of a projected companion piece, 'Silence on Earth', begins 'Always the voices [...]'. Gascoyne describes how the tormenting interior voices 'whispered constantly incomplete and unintelligible phrases, but how he could always distinguish the words "the gods", "the gods"', which he didn't find strange because of what he knew of Hölderlin's experience (*DGEN*, p.23).

[7] The heading, 'Bile and spleen, nausea, self-reproach', precedes a poignant attempt to produce a poem on the following page, addressing the 'voices': 'Yes. Thank you. Now I can start the day/Writing this poem. You have shown me the way./I have no longer any gift to give/Yet I must it seems write poems. One has to live./For a long while I've been piling up a lot/Of things I badly wanted to say but could not./ I've lost my sense of form, I have no style/No nostalgic melody, no magic, only bile.' (no pag.). At least there is a recognizable rhythm, and a regular rhyme scheme. On another page, a short passage shows the effort required to try to balance inner and outer worlds, to stave off incipient paranoia and to confront 'writer's block': 'It is now at last clear enough to me that the Manichean Heresy is rampant about the world once more. This is the form that intelligence's instinctive resistance to the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven takes in intelligent people demoralized by contact with bourgeois power...' (no.pag.).

When the war ended, Gascoyne was to learn that the young painter, Bent Von Müllen, had been arrested and hanged by the Gestapo during the Nazi occupation of Denmark. 'This news affected me as a bereavement from which I recovered very slowly' (*CJS*, p.397). He found that another intimate friend, the young German poet Wolf Berthold, had committed suicide.[8] In addition, Gascoyne had to come to terms with the loss of his mentor, Benjamin Fondane who, he had just discovered, had been gassed at Birkenau on 3rd October 1944, after his betrayal to the Gestapo in Paris. In the spring of 1947, after what 'can now be seen as a turning point in the development of French poetry: the emergence of poetry of Resistance',[9] Pierre Jean Jouve came to London and Oxford to deliver a lecture entitled *L'Apologie du Poète*. Later in 1947 Gascoyne returned to Paris, to be denounced publicly by André Breton and summarily expelled from the Surrealist group. Nevertheless, he remained in that city for about a year, and had the opportunity to make many important contacts largely through the kindness of Madame Roland de Margerie, who was at that time a kind of 'godmother' to him (*DGEN*, p.22). Jouve had had to give up his pre-war apartment and took a single-storied studio near the Porte d'Orléans which had once belonged to Stravinsky's son, where Gascoyne visited him often. However, he met Paul Eluard again only once after the War (*INCP*, p.xx).

As his orange (no longer black) notebooks of the last years of the decade testify, Gascoyne continued to pursue his profound interest in philosophy: Raine recalls that he read voraciously, 'widely and deeply in works of mystical philosophy', as well as existentialism and how he would talk 'rapidly and eloquently, of the divine vision which haunted his darkness like the sun at midnight' (*TLU*, pp.162-3).[10] Three notebooks (the first two dated 1949, the third 1950) contain copious notes on Heidegger under a general heading on the cover: 'Existential Philosophy Notebooks'. The title on the first page of each is 'Existence–Philosophy & Auto-transcendence'.[11] In each of these notebooks,

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[8] Berthold, a refugee, whom Gascoyne knew in the late thirties, 'had heroically refused to do his military service' (*DGEN*, p.22).

[9] Gascoyne, 'Departures' in *New Departures* 15, ed. Michael Horovitz, p.56. Further citings as (*DGD*).

[10] He has admitted to Duclos that (my translation) his 'interest in philosophy isn't at all academic – I have no academic philosophical training'. He has never entertained the idea that philosophy might be harmful to his verse by giving it 'too abstract a cast of mind' because as he explains: 'Existential philosophy fights against abstraction' (*MDC*, p.43).

[11] A sub-heading, in Notebook I reads: 'Material towards a book for the S.C.M. series "Viewpoint" in three parts.' Below, he has written: '1. Historical summary of present situation in philosophy, religious thought, social development. 2. Critical analytical exposition of the principal concepts of Kierkegaard, Chestov & Heidegger. 3. Glossary of signifiicant key-terms in Existentialism' (no pag.). He planned six essays: 1. Léon Chestov; 2. Martin Heidegger; 3. Pascal; 4. Sören Kierkegaard; 5. Nietzsche; 6.

which also include translations of poems by Jouve, the lucid rubs shoulders with the confused and near unintelligible.[12]

Gascoyne was now in the fourth and final chronological phase[13] of his creative activity as a poet. These divisions may be convenient, but it is undeniable that there is a fundamental unity and continuity in poetic output insofar as particular themes are constant: a love for mankind together with an acknowledgement of his weakness, resonates throughout his verse together with a firm belief in the possibility of redemption; his concept of poetry as a vehicle for the expression of spiritual activity; a concern with the question of ontology in our time which he has qualified in terms of a metaphor, 'the World's Midnight', with its 'overtly catastrophic ambience' (*DGD*, p.56). Michael Schmidt points to Gascoyne's 'careful ordering and reordering of poems in sequences and groups', suggesting 'that the poems exist to signify in their relatedness to one another, that there is a unity, or a progression, in the work which is nonetheless open-ended' (*MSI*, pp.286-7).

Although, with hindsight, there were already indications of the nervous breakdowns which were to come, with stays in mental hospitals and long silences as he struggled with 'writer's block', Gascoyne, though necessarily less prolific than in the thirties, continued to contribute poems, translations and essays between 1944 and 1950 to the major 'little magazines' on both sides of the Channel, such as *Poetry (London)*, *Horizon*, *New Road*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Nine*, *Adam International Review*, *Mandrake*, *World Review*, and *Botteghe Oscure* and *Points*, as well as to the *Times Literary Supplement* and *New Statesman and Nation*.[14] However, as he pointed out in 1988, he

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Existential Philosophy in the Prose Writing of Poets (Donne, Milton, Traherne, Blake, Novalis, Hölderlin [letters], Keats, Coleridge, Rimbaud, Patmore, Whitman, etc.). Notebook IV is headed: Philosophy/Poetry/Notes/1950' on the cover.

[12] Another entry, in Notebook II (summer 1949) reads: 'No Peace till the Unarmed Civil War is over. The Wrong shall be Right and the Right shall be Wrong. According to the ancient tradition. The Overdog shall be an underlord and the Superb subman shall become a man like many men. The more we are together, the sillier we shall be, in the meantime' (no pag.).

[13] It seems both practical and logical to suggest that ***Roman Balcony*** represents phase one; ***Man's Life is this Meat*** and his adherence to the theory and practice of Surrealism, phase two; meetings with Jouve and Fondane, and ***Hölderlin's Madness***, phase three as he searches for a new language; ***Poems 1937-42*** in his own, mature voice and, at the end of the decade, ***A Vagrant and other poems*** together with ***Encounter with Silence***, phase four.

[14] *Selected Writing* (winter 1944): translations of two poems by Jules Supervielle; *Poetry Quarterly* (spring 1946): 'Introducing Kenneth Patchen'; *Adam 156-7* (March-April 1946): 'Elsewhere', and *Adam 159/60* (June-July 1946): 'Concert of Angels'; *New Road* (April 1946): 'A Little Anthology of Existential Thought'; *Poetry Quarterly* (summer 1946): 'Note on Symbolism – its role in Metaphysical Thought';

was 'increasingly disappointed with post-war governments' failure to implement the dreams and promises of a radically improved new future that had helped the Allies bring the Third Reich to an end'. He adds, without bitterness: 'In my case this disappointment was compounded by the realization that I could no longer depend on the untrammelled spontaneity of inspiration I had assiduously cultivated before the War' (*INCP*, p.xix). In the light of Gascoyne's retrospective observations, it is interesting to turn to some points made by the poet and critic, G.S. Fraser, in his essay of 1949 on the situation and achievements of English poetry in that year which marked the end of 'an exhausting decade'. Fraser notes that 'The years since the end of the war have, on the whole, been a slack period' for poetry, and acknowledges as 'less poetically stimulating' the process of re-adjustment to peacetime conditions. 'For the 1930s poets,' he comments, 'the public situation was in a sense their leading theme. But with the outbreak of war, when everybody was caught up in public duties, it was the inner, the personal, the private life – something to be enjoyed, during a war, only in fits and starts – that began to have a poetic fascination'. He warns that 'It is very dangerous for the poet to feel that he has been completely cut adrift from the feelings and the interests of common life'.[15] In Gascoyne's case, this is what almost seems to emerge in the title poem of the new collection, 'A Vagrant'.

Fifteen of the poems included in ***A Vagrant and other Poems*** appeared in print before its publication; at least six of these were written during the year-long post-war visit (1947-8), to Paris or as a result of it.[16] It has been suggested[17] that for the title of this collection Gascoyne drew on two lines from the American poet, Edwin Arlington Robinson: 'He mourned Romance, now on the town,/And Art, a vagrant'. Gascoyne has

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Mandrake (winter 1946): translation of Reverdy's 'Reflux'; *Poetry* (London), (Sept.-Oct. 1947): 2 translations from Jouve; *Horizon* (August 1948): 'A Vagrant'; *Poetry* (London) 13 (June-July 1948): 'New French Poetry – A Paris Letter'; *Poetry* (London) 14 (Nov.-Dec. 1948): 'The Sacred Hearth'; *Poetry* (London) 15 (May 1949): 'A Rondel for the Fourth Decade', 'September Sun: 1947'; *Nine* (spring 1949): 'Puer Aeternus'; *Nine* (autumn 1949): 'Rex Mundi'; *Horizon* (Jan. 1949): 'An Unsagacious Animal or the Triumph of Art over Nature'; *Horizon* (April 1949): 'Demos in Oxford Street'; *Horizon* (October 1949): 'Léon Chestov'; *Botteghe Oscure* IV: 'Absconded Eros', 'No End in Sight', 'The Unfulfilled', 'Beware Beelzebub', 'Birth of a Prince', 'The Post-War Night'; *Points* 6 (May-June 1950): 'Pisces', 'Gemini', 'Leo', 'Virgo', Scorpio', 'Sagittarius'; *Botteghe Oscure* V (1950): 'A Cornet of Winkles'; *Times Literary Supplement* (Oct. 6 1950): 'A Tough Generation'; *Points* 8 (December 1950/Jan. 1951): 'On the Grand Canal', 'Sizzling-Seclusion-Rhumba'; *Botteghe Oscure* VI (1950): 'After Twenty Springs', 'A Little Zodiac for K.J.R.'; *New Statesman and Nation* (Nov. 11 1950): 'Innocence and Experience'; *World Review* (March 1950): 'The Post-War Night'.

[15] 'Poetry' in *The Year's Work in Literature 1949* (Longmans, Green & Co., 1950), pp.45-6.

[16] He does not specify which (*INCP*, p.xix).

[17] See Gavin Ewart's review in the *London Magazine* (*GEVFD*, p.92).

said that this is possible since the poem was familiar, but that it was not a conscious or deliberate decision at all (*MDC*, p.34).

He characterizes 'A Vagrant'[18] as 'the apologia of a premature beatnik or drop-out, [...] partly based on the idle, hotel-room existence I led at that time' (*INCP*, p.xix), and as 'a distinctly "anti-bourgeois" poem, whose approach is comparable to the freer and more declamatory poetic style of [Allen] Ginsberg and his American companions' (*DGEN*, p.23).[19] For Edwin Muir writing in 1950, it is 'an imaginative statement of our dilemma today',[20] while for Anthony Cronin, it 'is a microcosm of our world. Its tone, too, sombre, quiet and ironic, is a rare and difficult achievement' (*ACPI*, p.53). The title poem takes its epigraph from a line by Alfred de Vigny: "Mais il n'a point parlé, mais cette année encore/Heure par heure en vain lentement tombera' ('But he hasn't spoken at all, but this year again/Hour by hour in vain he will slowly fall'). In the poem as first published there are numerous alterations from the draft version in notebook Add.56058, some quite significant in that in the course of revision there seems to have been a change of focus or of emphasis.

The tone is at first conversational, matter-of-fact:

> 'They're much the same in most ways, these great cities. Of
> them all,
> Speaking of those I've seen, this one's still far the best
> Big densely built-up area for a man to wander in
> Should he have ceased to find shelter, relief,
> Or dream in sanatorium bed.'

It borders on the comical, five lines below, as he imagines someone (identified later as 'this job-barker') coming to 'bark briskly' at him:

> "A most convenient solution has at last
> Been found, after the unavoidable delay due to this spate of
> wars
> That we've been having lately. This is it:
> Just fill in (in block letters) on the dotted-line your name
> And number. From now on until you die all is
> O.K., meaning the clockwork's been adjusted to accommo-

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[18] Composed in a Paris hotel room in 1948.

[19] He met the Beat poets in the 1950s, and again in San Francisco many years later, after his marriage.

[20] Review of *A Vagrant and other poems* in *The Observer* (24 December 1950), p.7, reprinted in *Edwin Muir, The Truth of Imagination*. Some Uncollected Reviews and Essays, edited and introduced by P.H. Butter (Aberdeen University Press, 1988), p.111. Further citings as (*EMAV*).

date
You nicely; all you need's to eat and sleep,
To sleep and eat and eat and laugh and sleep,
And sleep and laugh and wake up every day
Fresh as a raffia daisy!"

And is maintained in:

His line may in the end
Provide me with a noose with which to hang myself, should I
Discover that the strain of doing nothing is too great
A price to pay for spiritual integrity.

However, as the poem develops, the tone becomes ironical, though as Kathleen Raine points out,[21] Gascoyne here and elsewhere has the 'courage to refrain from mocking or from any other defensive gesture':

The soul
Is said by some to be a bourgeois luxury, which shows
A strange misunderstanding both of soul and bourgeoisie.
The Sermon on the Mount is just as often misconstrued
By Marxists as by wealthy congregations, it would seem.

The speaker gradually reveals his credo and his (not *the*) post-war condition, mental, emotional, spiritual. He feels displaced, an outsider. Instead of the former fusion of the private and the public in ***Poems 1937-42***, there is a strong sense of unconnectedness. He sees himself as representative of 'Modern Man in Search of Soul' who appears 'A comic criminal or an unbalanced bore to those/Whose fear of doing something foolish fools them. *Je m'en fous!*' [22] Uncomfortably aware of his difference, he is ironically witty, too:

Blessèd are they, it might be said, who are not of this race
Of settled average citizens secure in their *état*
Civil of snowy guiltlessness and showy high ideals
Permitting them achieve an inexpensive life-long peace
Of mind, through dogged persistence, frequent aspirin, and
bile
Occasionally vented via trivial slander ...Baa,
Baa, O sleepy-sickness-rotted sheep, in your nice fold
Are none but marketable fleeces.[23]

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[21] 'A Visionary': review of *A Vagrant and other poems* in *New Statesman and Nation* (December 16 1950), p.633. Further citings as (*KJRAV*).

[22] The deliberate injection of French words and phrases: '*Je m'en fous!*'; 'their *état/Civil*'; 'the quais'; '*raison d'être*'; and the franglais expression 'cosy-corner', serve merely to provide a flavour of his stay in Paris.

[23] In reverse, one of Fernando Pessoa's heteronyms, the confessional Alvaro de Campos, chooses the mask of a vagrant in the poem 'He passed me, came after me' where, as Octavio Paz says, 'his sympathy for the underdog is tinged with disgust, but feels that disgust above all for himself: 'I feel sympathy for all

The last, grating three lines quoted, demonstrate only too clearly the problematic use of language, where the colloquial rubs shoulders uneasily with the 'prosy' and the mundane in an awkward mixture, here and in the poem as a whole. There are caesuras in several lines, variations in length, and no consistent rhythmical pattern or rhyme.[24] Uncharacteristically, and symptomatic, too, of his lack of mental stability ['in a psychological trough again'], (*PGDG*, p.146)], Gascoyne's usual generosity of spirit is not so immediately apparent in his depiction of those citizens[25] with whom he does not, and never can, belong, yet his tolerance of others is undiminished, as today. The speaker/Gascoyne is not one to strike poses but will throw in his lot immediately with:

> The stone-winning lone wolves whose future cells
> Shall make home-founding unworthwhile. Unblessèd let me go
> And join the honest tribe of patient prisoners and ex-
> Convicts, and all such victims of the guilt
> Society dare not admit its own.

Geoffrey Thurley indicates that 'the poet who has thought the bourgeois life incompatible with "spiritual integrity" [...] has gone so far as to refuse it in consequence'.[26]

In a poem which is concerned with philosophical questioning, his life seems purposeless, without meaning: he has become a vagrant, 'although anxious still just sane' in his state of 'quasi-dereliction'[27]:

> Or but stray
> Slowly along the quais towards the ends of afternoons
> That lead to evenings empty of engagements, or at night
> Lying resigned in cosy-corner crow's-nest, listen long
> To sounds of the surrounding city desultorily
> Seeking in loud distraction some relief from what its nerves

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those people,/Especially when they do not merit it./Yes, I too am a vagrant and I crave .../To be vagrant and a beggar is not to be those things/But to be outside the social hierarchy. His vagrancy and social penury,' continues Paz, 'have no circumstantial source; they are irremediable and unredeemable. To be vagrant thus is *to be isolated in the soul*'. See his essay on Pessoa, 'Unknown to Himself', in *Fernando Pessoa: A Centenary Pessoa*, (ed.) Eugenio Lisboa with L.C. Taylor (Carcanet, 1995, 1997), p.14.

[24] Tolley, however, finds that the poem has a 'subdued yet carefully controlled rhythm' (*ATTPF*, p.146).

[25] Those 'deemed [...] to be incurious, undoubting and therefore half-dead': C.J. Fox, 'A Most Furious Fool', review of ***Collected Poems 1988*** in *PN Review*, Vol.15, no.1 (1988), p.56

[26] *The Ironic Harvest: English poetry in the twentieth century* (London: Edward Arnold, 1974), p.114. Further citings as (*GTIH*).

[27] The original sequence of lines with echoes of the early T.S. Eliot, subsequently altered, reads as follows: 'I stand in actuality quite tranquil in my state/Of nondescript half-dereliction, or maybe I stray/Slowly along the quays towards the ends of afternoons/Of which the evenings are all empty,/and when the night has fallen, lone/I lay awake for hours and listen listlessly without/Stirring except to light a cigarette, to distant sounds/Of the surrounding city seeking desultorily/Relief from the awareness always gnawing at its nerves/Of its constant unremedied lack of all raison d'être'.

> Are gnawed by. I mean knowledge of its lack of *raison d'être.*
> The city's lack and mine are just the same.

The speaker has no illusions about himself: there is never, here or elsewhere in his work, any attempt at evasion. He presents himself 'naked',[28] the loneliness, lassitude and accidie almost tangible. The authenticity of what we read is never in doubt. Stephen Romer comments on the 'chastened tone' of the poem, 'an achievement in itself. Still uncompromising, it is the utterance of a man who has suffered much, and is quite honest about his condition' (*SRAW*, p.21). This observation is echoed by Thurley who finds this interior monologue 'un-shrill, and without a trace of hollow self-vindication' (*GTIH*, p.113). The poem ends on a pessimistic note: 'What, oh what can/A vagrant hope to find to take the place of what was once/Our expectation of the Human City in which each man might/Morning and evening, every day, lead his own life, and Man's?' As Tolley, points out, 'the modern city [in 'A Vagrant'] is the home of the spiritual emptiness and alienation that is the source of the poet's despair' (*ATTPF*, p.146). Yet Raine's perception is that 'For circumventing or transcending despair [Gascoyne] finds other and nobler reasons: the presence of God and the Divine Humanity' (*KJR*, p.633).

This poem seems to be dedicated to marginality and solitude, as does 'A Tough Generation', structured in a single stanza of twenty-seven lines, which reflects again so clearly the speaker's sense of drifting rudderless, 'unguided', in a post-war world where the present is directionless, the future unclear:

> To grow unguided at a time when none
> Are sure where they should plant their sprig of trust;
> When sunshine has no special mission to endow
> With gold the rustic rose, which will run wild
> And ramble from the garden to the wood
> To train itself to climb the trunks of trees
> If the old seedsman die and suburbs care
> For sentimental cottage-flowers no more;

It is particularly interesting that Gascoyne should choose to employ imagery from the natural world throughout another interior monologue; here, the city is absent and the setting is rural: 'rustic rose'; 'garden to the wood'; 'a wood of rotted trees'; 'unkempt rose'; 'woodland shade'. The tone, again, is conversational, direct, and uncomplaining;

[28] It was just this aspect that Terence Tiller initially found disturbing.

the speaker comes close to a note of world-weary acceptance as he seeks in his disillusionment and estrangement for some accommodation:

first
One always owes a duty to oneself;
This much at least is certain: one must live.
And one may reach, without having to search
For much more lore than this, a shrewd maturity,
Equipped with adult aptitude to ape
All customary cant and current camouflage;
Nor be a whit too squeamish where the soul's concerned.

If John Press's question of 'whether his [Gascoyne's] language matches the range and intensity of his themes' is to be applied to this new collection, and to poems such as 'A Vagrant' and 'A Tough Generation', a new way of looking is required as Gascoyne has moved on and his utterance now is plainer, more precise. On the other hand, the diction employed in the earlier 'The Sacred Hearth' and 'September Sun: 1947' offers clear evidence of Gascoyne's poetic integrity and what Press calls 'the tragic splendour of his vision'[29]

'The Sacred Hearth', dedicated to George Barker,[30] one of his closest friends during the thirties and forties, and after, was completed at the end of the previous decade:[31] the hand-written projected title, 'To George Barker (September 1st)' appears in 'Dedicatory and Commemorative Poems' under the heading *The Conquest of Defeat* – Poems 1939-40, and in another of the notebooks as 'The Sacred Fire' or 'The Hearth' (see **Appendix 2D,E**). In 'The Sacred Hearth' there is a detectable measured, rhythmical pattern, and a musicality, fluency and declarative simplicity that are not evidently present in 'A Vagrant'. This visionary poem, anchored in place and time, marks an episode during 'the intimate Spring night' in the 1930s. As Barker and his wife lay sleeping above, Gascoyne was 'summoned suddenly/By distant voice' to 'stumble barefoot down the stairs to seek the air/Outdoors' where mist lay under an 'adolescent moon'. The trees in the orchard stood 'perfect as part of one of Calvert's idylls'. Wondering what has impelled him to leave his bed, he

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[29] *Rule and Energy* (Oxford University Press, 1963), p.87. Further citings as (*JPRAE*).

[30] Barker, in turn, dedicated two poems to Gascoyne. In the first, 'To David Gascoyne', the last line reads: 'And I shall speak of love on every first of September'; the second poem is 'For Gascoyne's 65th Birthday'. For a full treatment of their friendship, see ***The Fire of Vision: George Barker and David Gascoyne***, edited and introduced by Roger Scott (Tragara Press for Enitharmon, 1996).

[31] Gascoyne told Alan Clodd in 1995 that he couldn't understand why it was not included in his ***Poems 1937-42***.

> wandered out across the briar-bound garden, spellbound. Most
> Mysterious and unrecapturable moment, when I stood
> There staring back at the dark white nocturnal house,
> And saw gleam through the lattices a light more pure than gold
> Made sanguine with crushed roses, from the firelight that all night
> Stayed flickering about the sacred hearth.

The sequence bears all the hallmarks of a dream, but the basis of the poem is Gascoyne's experience: 'One night when I had just left George Barker's house for only a few moments' (*DGUI*, p.133), which has been transfigured in a poetic form of transcendent imagination.[32]

He addresses his friend directly:

> George, in the wood
> Of wandering among wood-hiding trees, where poets' art
> Is how to whistle in the dark, where pockets all have holes,
> All roofs for refugees have rents, we ought to know
> That there can be for us no place quite alien and unknown,
> No situation wholly hostile, if somewhere there burn
> The faithful fire of vision still awaiting our return.

The effect of the poem as a whole is one of complete authenticity mediated through appropriately heightened language.

The poet Jeremy Reed refers to 'the luminous mysticism inherent in 'The Sacred Hearth',[33] but Philip Gardner argues that only one poem in this new collection 'recaptures the mystical fire of the preceding volume'. He is referring to 'the splendidly taut, symmetrical, Hopkinesque "September Sun: 1947"' (*PGDG*, p146). At the time he wrote it Gascoyne was living in Paris in the Hôtel du Pas-de-Calais, and 'it was a magnificent day during an Indian Summer. I went for a walk in the gardens at Versailles' (*DGUI*, p.134). He adds that he has always loved public gardens and parks, as can be seen in several poems in his various collections. 'Hopkinesque', implying very particular qualities and verse technique, seems something of an overstatement, though there is a precise, controlled structure and a balance here: three verses of five lines of ten or twelve

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[32] It is difficult to share Press's view that this poem 'exhibits a [...] tendency to pull out the Romantic organ stops'. He accuses Gascoyne of 'manipulating verbal counters which have lost their original value', and of a 'lavish use of such conventionally evocative words as "spell-bound", "mysterious", "nocturnal", "gleam", "sanguine with crushed roses"' (*JPRAE*), pp.88-9).

[33] Typescript: 'Apprehending the Marvellous', his review of Gascoyne's ***Selected Poems*** (Enitharmon Press, 1994), p.3, which was to appear in *Resurgence*.

syllables, in which the first and fifth, and second and fourth lines rhyme in each; the ending of the third 'c' line, 'see' – 'be' – 'He', remains constant throughout.

The flatness of the first line with its strong beats: 'Magnificent strong sun! in these last three days', gives way to the measured rhythm of the second and following lines, - and of the rest of the poem:

> So prodigally generous of pristine light
> That's wasted only by men's sight who will not see
> And by self-darkened spirits from whose night
> Can rise no longer orison or praise.

The theme is immediately recognisable: a sad acknowledgement in the phrase 'self-darkened spirits' of Man's wilful spiritual blindness, and of the hollowness of a world where he no longer prays to nor praises God. The middle verse addresses the anxious speaker's concern to realise his potential: 'may the quickened gold within me come/To mintage in due season, and not be/Transmuted to no better end than dumb/And self-sufficient usury'. There is an urgency in this self-scrutiny and, again, an unquestionable authenticity.

This poem transmits an underlying tension: though bathed in the life-giving warmth of the September sun he has apostrophised, Gascoyne is, at the same time, sensitive in the full light of an Indian Summer's day to the spiritual night of Man. The final verse anticipates the wrath of God if Man's 'labours only yield/Glitter and husks'. Press takes the following lines to represent 'a foreboding of the world's annihilation' (*JPRAE*, p.88):

> Then with an angrier sun may he
> Who first with His gold seed the sightless field
> Of Chaos planted, all our trash to cinders bring.[34]

Some of the language used: 'prodigally generous'; 'orison'; 'let us consume in fire like yours'; 'come to mintage in due season'; 'self-sufficient usury'; 'Chaos'; has an antiquated, even a Romantic (Blakean) flavour, but it could be argued that this is

[34] This is echoed by a line in 'Evening Again' which follows in the collection: 'They see nothing but the wrath/Of still prolonged and future conflagrations'.

appropriate to the long history of Man's persistent failure to acknowledge God's presence, extending into the present age.[35]

'Demos in Oxford Street' employs a conversational tone and plain language without imagery or symbolism. The setting is 'this thoroughfare, of all surely the most/Average in any average modern capital'. There is playfulness in the inversion, 'O Sting!/Where is our life?[36] Where is my neighbour, Love?' To some extent this is a political poem in the choice of 'demos' the Greek word signifying 'citizen' or 'the people/the masses' (not 'demos' in the sense of the shortened form of 'demonstrations'). Gascoyne has said that 'There is in this text a kind of deception and disillusionment' (*DGUI*, p.134), his own disillusionment stemming not from Socialism itself, but from dissatisfaction with 'the Socialists in power after the Second World War' (*MDC*, p.33). He identifies with 'The People':

> Stare
> As boldly as you like into our faces, we'll not turn
> Aside out of your way. We're not the Working-Class.

Gascoyne added in that same conversation with Duclos: 'this is an ironic and satirical poem' (Ibid.), and the statement is clarified in the final lines quoted above: the faces are those of the workers who have become 'petit bourgeois' and consider themselves superior now (*DGUI*, p.134).

'Rondel for the Fourth Decade' is both a celebration of the 1940s and an acknowledgement of the passage of time and the ageing process – together with the tension between heart and mind produced by the need for a willing and understanding acceptance of the inevitable. The theme is commonplace; the verse structure, however, is unusual for Gascoyne with its precise rhyming pattern and variations: here he uses two four- and one five-line stanzas, thirteen lines like the Charles d'Orléans development of

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[35] An additional verse was added in 1981 and first published in *New Departures*, Third International Poetry Olympics, Number 15, ed. Michael Horovitz. The contribution including the original poem, was headed 'An Old Poem Updated', p.58: 'Those days and years! Glitter and husks: what more/Have we to show now that the doomsday clock/Implacably moves onwards to what may/Well prove to be that dreadful final war/So many faithful prophets have foretold? What shock/Can wake to vigil rulers and ruled today?'

[36] 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?': Corinthians 15:55.

the form,[37] but in place of his Rondel rhyming abba, abba, abbaa, Gascoyne's version follows abba, abab, baabb. The final two lines leave the tension unresolved: 'The heart's remains lie still denying/Mind ever knew the truth while dying'.

The 'Three Venetian Nocturnes' belong to a period when Gascoyne was staying in the Italian city and urgently needed money to settle his hotel bill. 'I knew that Princess Marguerite Catani, editor of the review *Botteghe Oscure*, paid well for material written for her, and I wrote them in one week and sent them to her' (*DGUI*, p.135). 1. 'Barcarolle's symmetrical structure of three quintains of fourteen syllables with a regular rhyme scheme, abcac/defed/ghhgh,[38] reflects the poet's ease in his surroundings and in the tranquillity of the Venetian night. Texture, colour, measured rhythm and sound are the focus of the poet's response [my italics]: 'Each *blue* sun-floodlit day *floats* through a *green* evening till Night/Releases *flows of indigo*'. The emphatic appeal to the senses of touch, hearing and motion in the following lines, continues throughout the poem [my italics again]:

> And deep into *dark velvet folds* are absorbed from the air
> The *orchestrated murmurs of the crowd* and bursts of bright
> *Abruptly ebbing brassy music bruited* from the Square.
>
> On the Lagoon *drift shreds of serenade* from lanterned boats
> That *bob more quickly like a pulse* when from the Lido steers
> Close past them the returning *vaporetto*; the heart *beats*
> *More quickly* for a moment, *lifted on a wave of tears*
> *Upwelling but not breaking* in the eyes of one who floats...

A passenger, gazing upward, Gascoyne sees 'all the stars/In heaven like spilt pearls blur on the *black* robe Venice wears/*Slackly undulating round'* this 'nocturnal bride'.

In 2. 'Lido Gala Fireworks', he makes over-zealous use of alliteration describing rockets that explode in the 'grapebloom sky', in a display that he captures with the precision of a painter's eye, finding objective correlatives for the myriad shapes and colours of the non-stop sequence of explosions:

> Rainbows of gelid jewellery smashed to flashlit smithereens
> And moulting molten-crystal plumes of birds of paradise
> Spontaneously splintering their mixed Murano tints

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[37] (1391-1466). See Robin Skelton, 'The Technology of Verse: A Guide', the Appendix to his *The Practice of Poetry* (London: Heinemann, 1971), pp.176-7.

[38] There are three half rhymes in the last stanza: 'stars' – 'wears' – 'years'.

Into a slowly dropping drift of dust of opals, Milky Way
Stained with a long dynasty of fire-peacock's last blood;

In lines 8-10, the poet who is bombarded by sounds and colours, is drawn to employ quasi-Surrealist imagery to express the vividness and actuality of a scene where the fireworks are all, seeming to take away all thought and awareness of everything else as he describes 'all night's spark-sprayed dome'

Streaked
With shivering scars of wounds stabbed by the rays of soaring stars,
Stars piercing scarlet holes, holes bleeding light,
Light strained through silk, silk blobbed with black,
Black blurred with sea-water, blue...

The incompleteness of the last line conveys not only the continuous intensity of the exploding rockets' attack on the senses; it points up, too, in the welter of alliterative words an awareness of the self-indulgent, self-consciously 'poetic' nature of the exercise. Gardner observes in all 'Three Venetian Nocturnes' 'a tendency to overelaborate verbalizing' (*PGDG*, p.146).

Poem 3, 'On the Grand Canal', like the previous two, is purely descriptive; there is none of the philosophical musing on the condition of man, none of the urgency of the prophetically driven poet of ***Poems 1937-42***. The opening line (of thirty-seven)[39] here is arresting: 'The palaces are sombre cliffs by night;' as the speaker, on board a *vaporetto* glides by 'The twilight velvet cloister-cells of lives/Upon whose intimacy we may gaze'. His eye is caught by 'a young girl's head/In a near window, her sweet fresh-coloured face/Vividly lit with eagerness, whose aspect made/Me wonder what it was she held before her'.[40] Instead of a text by Goldoni or Shakespeare, her hand grasps a fan of playing cards. This chance sighting is imbued with a momentary significance:

Though my excitement at the glimpse of her
Swiftly became an elegiac feeling
As the boat's motion swept her from my sight.

[39] There were 39 lines in the version printed in *Points*, no.8 (Paris, Dec.1950-Jan.1951), pp.43-4. The poem as published in ***A Vagrant***, shows a large number of alterations.

[40] In *Points*, this section reads: '[...] and I observed/Was imaginatively moved by, a girl's head/Fresh and vivid with an earnest eagerness/That made her face seem rescued out of time/As by some novelist's or painter's genius'.

Kathleen Raine comments that Gascoyne's images 'are often beautiful and jewel-like in their artifice, or reproduce the nostalgic quality of Impressionist music and painting'. She refers to that of the girl paying cards and to another of 'a child driving a white goat-cart in the Luxembourg gardens' (*KJRAV*, p.633).

'Evening Again' (twenty lines of varying length) recalls a journey Gascoyne made with his friend, Jenny de Margerie[41] to visit her cousin, Jean Rostand, near Saint-Germain-en-Laye. On their return they crossed the Seine on a level with the Ile de la Cité. He found the buildings he could see on the other side of the river very impressive (*DGUI*, pp.134-5). Although the setting is Paris under the red evening sky, he employs the same metaphor as in the opening line of 'On the Grand Canal' ('The palaces are sombre *cliffs* by night'): here the 'stone façades of ageing buildings' are personified as 'sheer haggard *cliffs* pitted with windows', faces whose skin displays the ravages of time. Although the poem is descriptive, there is a meditative melancholy tone conferred by the weight of history: the 'gazing' panes 'see nothing but the wrath/Of still prolonged and future conflagrations'. Beneath the profuse fresh leaves on 'rigid branches' hang 'Shadows, dull undertones of mourning'. The ending is tinged with sadness:

> Heavily night falls.
> When shall I desire
> No more for rest from restlessness as evening ends?
> When no more into silence sinks the sigh that asks for joy.

This reflects more nearly the original title of this poem on its first publication: 'The Unfulfilled'.[42]

Together with 'Fragments towards a Religio Poetae' and 'The Sacred Hearth', 'A Vagrant' and 'The Post-War Night' are the four most significant poems in the collection. Gascoyne is the poet of night and of the city. 'The Post-War Night' is one of those poems which Gascoyne has recognized with hindsight, were 'rehearsing for, leading up to ***Night Thoughts***' throughout the thirties, forties and early fifties, effectively a long gestation period.[43]

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[41] Mother of the French Ambassador to England.
[42] In *Botteghe Oscure*, No.IV (1949).
[43] In conversation with me in 1995, when we were discussing ***Roman Balcony***. The other poems are: 'They Spoke of a New City'; 'Noctambules'; 'The Moon over London'; 'Phantasmagoria'; 'The Anchorite' (incomplete); 'The Conspirators' (incomplete); 'A Vagrant'; 'Fragment of an

This thirty-four-line, single stanza poem is a powerful, strongly felt indictment of British society after the Second World War: here is no objective assessment of the disillusionment experienced by the poet in a world 'Finally unified, at peace, free to create! *That sense/Is dull in all but a few today...'* For him, 'disheartened by futility', the post-war condition in 'this business-driven world' is one of anxiety and despair: there is no reassurance to be found in the word 'Peace' which is merely 'Our nightly black-out dream'. He pours scorn on 'Talk of Brotherhood and of the beautiful/Smooth-running Great Society that tomorrow mean/Our paradise regained!' Above all, we perceive the sense of guilt he shares[44] with all those 'compromised collusionists' who, remain 'still safe and sound/At least as long as this false peacetime lasts':

> How well our guilt,
> Long versed in all the necessary lies
> Required to run the world in practice knows
> How always to remain the same calm, sane
> Comfortably compromised collusionists.

The first half of the poem focuses on the opposition, blindness – light. '*In our time/We have had vision*': eyes in search of comfort are impressed by 'the flush of light' above the nocturnal city, but at midnight the moonless black sky 'rebukes light's illusions', reflecting a depression so consuming, that 'our seeing tries/Not to find blindness everywhere it peers,/Relinquishing belief in any sight surpassing this'. There is an urgent need to see the truth, accept responsibility:

> *We must see how to justify ourselves*
> *Always*. Perhaps indeed that is for ever all
> Our eyes are used to look for: We must stand
> Justified: - if not before the whole world then before
> Ourselves.

It is noticeable that Gascoyne always identifies with his fellow human beings, never withdrawing into the purely personal or hermetic. He uses 'our' eight times, 'ourselves' once and 'we' four times: Raine notes acutely that he is 'an outstanding example' of those poets who 'have attempted to make their subjectivity universal, in the prophetic or

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Unfinished/Unpublished Poem'; 'Metropolis By Night'; 'Nightwatchers' Ruminations'; 'Night Thoughts': an earlier version.

[44] In the first printing of the poem, *Botteghe Oscure*, No.IV (1949), the line 'To be truly *our* aim on earth [my emphasis], read '*their* aim on earth'.

visionary tradition.' Of all the poets now writing 'he is the most sensitively attuned to the *spiritus mundi*'.[45]

Gavin Ewart represents 'Towards A Religio Poetae' as 'Blake theology' (*GEVFD*, p.93). The epigraph is taken from Meister Eckhart whom Gascoyne had read before and during the war. He also had a copy of Jacob Boehme's *Aurore* which he read from time to time (*DGUI*, p.135).[46] This poem of ten sections, with the stanzas in each ranging from four, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, to eleven lines in length, addresses large issues which would later find their fullest and most satisfying expression in ***Night Thoughts*** (1956)[47]: important philosophical and religious questions, all related to the problems of being, of faith, belief and truth in a post-war world of false values and solitude, where mankind denies God. Section two of the sequence begins:

> The way to Life is through the entrance into Night:
> The recognition of the Night wherein each man
> Must have at first existence: knowing not
> The Whole.

Jennings glosses the lines as follows: 'This is both the dark night of the individual soul and the dark night of the world at the present time' (*EJROS*, p.198). These lines from the second half of the third section are representative of the thrust of the poem as a whole[48]:

> An overwhelming contradiction rends
> Apart all possibility of our addressing You
> Until we have within ourselves made one
> The will to self-exist and our desire to be:
> To be with God, and not pseudo-divine
> Scorn-inspired self-deceivers dreading most to be alone.

Gascoyne 'tries to define his beliefs about God and man, but not very strikingly,' writes Edwin Muir. 'These beliefs can be more clearly felt in the poems where he implies

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[45] See her essay on 'Poetry' in the *Year's Work in Literature 1950*, edited by John Lehmann (Longmans, Green & Co., 1951), pp.64-5. Further citings as (*KJRP*).

[46] Today, he thinks the poem contains too many upper-case letters; he is referring, for instance, to 'Son of Man', 'Son of God', 'Night', 'the Whole', 'Truth', 'Being', 'Light', 'Human Day', 'the World', 'Justice', 'City' (Ibid.).

[47] As I have outlined in my paper, 'David Gascoyne's *Night Thoughts*: "The Infernal Megalometropolis"', given at a colloquium, September 1999, in Newcastle upon Tyne, and first published in *Lecture(s) de la Ville/The City as Text*, ed. Gilbert Bonifas (Faculté des Lettres de Nice, University of Nice, 2000), pp.51-63; subsequently in *Temenos Academy Review* (London, spring 2001), pp. 107-22.

[48] Jennings rightly points out that 'the penultimate section of the sequence is a return to a meditation on the Crucifixion and the two thieves who died with Christ. The tone, however, is more bitterly ironic than that of "Ecce Homo"' (Ibid.).

without trying to define them, poems dealing concretely with experience, as in the title poem' (*EMAV*, p.112). The language employed in 'Towards A Religio Poetae' is old-fashioned on occasion, in 'an idiom a little closer to intellectual statement' than 'the symbolic language of poetry' (Pursglove, p.395), though as always the poet's sincerity is never in doubt.

Gascoyne celebrates his friendship with other poets in this volume: Lawrence Durrell in 'The Other Larry',[49] Kathleen Raine in 'A Little Zodiac for K.J.R.', and the French dada and Surrealist poet, Philippe Soupault, in 'Photograph'.[50] Gascoyne has said that the inspiration for the latter came from the portrait of Soupault taken by the famous American photographer, Bérénice Abbott, which appears in the selection *Philippe Soupault*, no.58 in the 'Poètes d'Aujourd'hui' series.[51] 'This text isn't specifically about Philippe Soupault; it is concerned above all,' says Gascoyne, 'with an ideal modern face. It begins with a concrete image of a photograph and doesn't include any metaphor or image; you could say that it's an "ethical poem"' (*DGUI*, p.133). In effect, the focus of 'Photograph' is the eyes of the sitter in his prime:

> Your eyes
> Are clear, more clear and keen than what they see, and gaze
> through pain,
> Straight into the hid heart of whatsoever lies ahead, with active
> trust,
> With scepticism and with the tried affection that cannot ever be
> Made disappointed by its object's failures.

Gascoyne acknowledges once again the importance for him of what is true:

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[49] Durrell had written a poem, 'Journal' about Gascoyne in 1939, and 'The Other Larry' is, in effect, a response to this, and 'it attempts to sum up certain differences between our points of view that had first become apparent during our discussions in pre-war Paris,' writes Gascoyne (*INCP*, p.xx), who comments elsewhere on Durrell's 'disbelief in the spiritual dimension of reality'.[49] He told Rémy that 'there is also the theme of the Other, of the mask' (*DGUI*, p.134).

[50] This poem was first dedicated to Soupault in ***Collected Poems 1988***, after Gascoyne had written asking his permission. Like Crevel, Soupault was one of Surrealist group in Paris with whom Gascoyne was unable to meet in the 1930s. Soupault had gradually severed contact with the Surrealists, concentrating on poetry as well as novel writing and travel journalism, which were unacceptable to Breton as he considered they must be intended for commercial gain. Gascoyne and Soupault met eventually when the French poet was in his mid-80s (c.1982), not long before Gascoyne completed his remarkable translation of *Les Champs Magnétiques* by Breton and Soupault, published in 1985 (Atlas Books), as *The Magnetic Fields*.

[51] By Henri-Jacques Dupuy, in the series edited by Pierre Seghers. The photograph appears between pp. 128/129. Soupault's poem, 'Ode à Londres bombardée', was first published in 1943.

You will thus always be
aware
That what is true is lovable, and you in knowing this
Will have become one in whose love the love of others may find
rest.

The poem which follows, like 'The Sacred Hearth' and 'Innocence and Experience' deals concretely with direct experience. 'Reported Missing' is understated, devoid of imagery or any arresting phrase, but qualifies in a broad sense as a 'war poem', concerned as it is with the six-year conflict and one of its victims. The speaker enters the bedroom of a serviceman he never met; looking at his photograph on the mantelpiece, he experiences an immediate rapport with its subject, whose 'subjugating charm' emanates from 'the eyes and features'. The tone is quiet, meditative, as the speaker stands in a world frozen in time. These 'unasked-for lines' about someone he 'cannot praise' commemorate more than one man missing in action.

Gascoyne has told me that 'Eros Absconditus' (two stanzas of nine and six lines) was written in memory of Bent Von Müllen,[52] to whom he dedicated 'Jardin du Palais Royal' in ***Poems 1947-42***. The later poem takes a line from Hölderlin for its epigraph: 'Wo aber sind die Freunde? Bellarmin/Mit dem Gefahrten ...' ('But where are the Friends? Where Bellarmine/And his companion').[53] Gascoyne has indicated that 'the central idea is that of male friendship', clarified in the final lines of the poem: '[...] The squalid inhibitions of those only half alive./In blind content they breed who never loved a friend'. He insisted to Rémy that 'it is not a "gay" poem' as the kind of love he describes 'exists over and above homosexuality' (*DGUI*, p.134).

Elizabeth Jennings explains that Gascoyne 'speaks of a human love which, although never completely attainable in this life, is nevertheless valid and capable of fulfilment elsewhere' (*EJROS*, p.196).[54] The first stanza begins:

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[52] I came across an unpublished poem, 'Guide', in one of the orange notebooks (c.1950) in the British Library. When I showed it to Gascoyne he told me that it is addressed to Bent Von Müllen.

[53] The translation from the poem 'Remembrance' is Michael Hamburger's, from his *Friedrich Hölderlin: Selected Poems and Fragments* (Penguin Books, 1998), p.253. David Constantine suggests that Hölderlin 'may have had his own friend Sinclair in mind' in Friedrich *Hölderlin*: *Selected Poems* translated by Constantine (Bloodaxe Books, 1990), p.78. Hölderlin had first met Isaak von Sinclair in 1793; after they met again in 1800, 'Sinclair was to prove a most loyal and helpful friend to Hölderlin in the next few years' (Hamburger, 'Introduction', p.xxv).

[54] She goes on: 'The keywords here are "aloneness", "reciprocity" and "gratuitous". The poem is a gesture of relinquishment, of assigning to others what one cannot possess oneself' (p.197).

> Not in my lifetime, the love I envisage:
> Not in this century, it may be. Nevertheless inevitable.
> Having experienced a foretaste of its burning
> And of its consolation, although locked in my aloneness
> Still, although I know it cannot come to be
> Except in reciprocity [...].

Gascoyne produces an elegy for D.H. Lawrence, who died in 1930, in another poem in this collection, 'After Twenty Springs',[55] and there is, perhaps, something Lawrentian in the ideas expressed here, in 'Eros Absconditus', close to the presentation of Birkin in *Women in Love* who always thinks of Gerald in relation to 'love' and 'friendship', never in terms of a sexual relationship.[56]

The title, 'The Goose-Girl', comes from a fairy story Gascoyne read when he was a child, and 'is probably a reflection on desire or on the chances I had of getting married' (*DGUI*, p.134). Gardner comments that both these poems 'present Gascoyne's personal, bi-sexual search for two contrasting kinds of love: one, apparently homosexual, like "a new kind of electricity"; the other, union with "a lonely silent girl" to whom he will be father, brother and husband' (*PGDG*, p.146). The next poem, 'Beware Beelzebub', uses the sonnet form, a stanza of fourteen lines of ten syllables with a rhyme scheme in abab,cdcd,efg,efg. 'This is an ironic poem, satirical if you like, against British puritanical hypocrisy' (*DGUI*, p.134). Here, Gascoyne is playful, witty, in full control of subject matter and verse technique, showing his deftness of touch in the effective use of alliteration, as these opening lines show (my emphasis):

> Listen, lover of the glistening peril,
> The lure lascive and wistful, the sweet pain
> Young lacing limbs delight in: the Devil
> Will never after smile at you again
> When once your easy acquiescence
> To his swift-reckoned bargain has put you
> Within the power of his swarming lieutenants,
> Who lurk in dull disguise the world's mart through.

The relationship of the Devil's power and the 'world's mart' prefigures Gascoyne's attack on materialism in Western society in *Night Thoughts*[57] where, in Section 2:

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[55] 'We who survived you and are struggling still today/(If very feebly and unostentatiously)/For life, more life, new life, fine warm full-blooded life [...].'

[56] See Graham Holderness's discussion of Lawrence and homosexuality in his Open Guide, *Women in Love* (Open University Press, 1986), p.75.

[57] In this later text, his sound-picture of the great nocturnal modern city, Gascoyne confronts by implication 'the ethical emptiness at the core of our financially speculative and commerce-impelled

'Megalometropolitan Carnival', the commentator announces the arrival in the Pluto Plaza of 'the Incognito Prince of Darkness' (a compound of Satan, the Devil and Mephistopheles).

The setting for 'Innocence and Experience' (which has no connection with Blake's *Songs*), is the private mansion of Madame Edwards, in the Faubourg Saint-Germain district in which she had lived for many years, including the period of Occupation. She was South American by birth, and wife of the owner-director of one of the famous Paris department stores, 'Les Magasins du Louvre'. Before the war, Madame Edwards was persuaded to give the poet a small monthly allowance, and she became 'a sort of patron'.[58] This long poem (sixty-three lines) commemorates the second visit made there by Gascoyne, this time in 1947 after a gap of ten years, accompanied by Jenny de Margerie, and is 'almost a transcription' of the visit, written immediately afterwards, as he told Duclos.

Gascoyne has said that 'the intention behind 'Innocence and Experience' was to produce something in the tradition of Eliot's early "Portrait of a Lady", modelled on my experience of a couple of meetings' with the lady in question (*INCP*, p.xx). However, looking at the finished poem, it is difficult to draw anything like a close comparison between the two. While it can be argued that the form of both poems is that of a monologue, that we are given a strong idea of the social milieu in each case, and that Gascoyne acknowledges the Modernist fondness for masks and for creating personae and imaginary details,[59] we do not hear the voices of the others in Madame Edwards's 'most private salon'; neither are there any of Eliot's several musical references; the speaker is not brooding over what has occurred, nor is this poem in part an argument with the self. In Eliot's poem we know more about the lady's impact on the speaker than about her appearance and, a further difference, the poem reaches a climactic moment in the third section of his tripartite narrative and dramatic structure.

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world': his essay 'The Poet and the City' in ***David Gascoyne: Selected Prose 1934-1996***, ed. Roger Scott (Enitharmon Press, 1998), p.127. In a broader sense, he has always observed the inefficacy of a materialist view of the universe.

[58] I have provided in the first paragraph here an amalgam of various details of background information found in (*MDI*, pp.30-32), (*DGUI*, p.133) and (*INCP*, p.xx).

[59] Gascoyne included a purely speculative childhood incident, and invented the notion that Madame Edwards was the daughter of a South American dictator.

Gascoyne provides a record of the visit, a description of their hostess and her modern art collection, and addresses other concerns not pertinent to Eliot's poem. 'Innocence and Experience' focuses immediately on Madame Edwards's face:

> Beneath the well-born weak-lined gentle flesh
> Its firmly-moulded bonework did much to sustain
> This face's actively upheld nobility. I had the time
> To gaze upon a late transmuted beauty
> Known none too kindly to the north in our cold time.
> Yet I knew warmth was there, where were born both
> Her Southern mildness and Repression's bleakest whim...

The rhythm of some of the lines is broken by stilted phrasing,[60] almost as though, as a painter with words, he is concentrating too hard on depicting as precisely as he can both the physical details and his impression of the character and temperament of the person he has just visited again, trying to see behind the mask:

> Attentive, I beheld a less premeditated look
> Melting the mask till one could see it once had worn
> The serene, robust air as of never-rebuked gaiety
> That shakes like laughter round a regally-loved child.

But hers is not the only mask:

> Under the weight of false presuppositions hanging round
> Upon all three of us, the other lady frowned (touched too; too
> Tired) -
> Her constant lit cheroot let fall a not entirely
> Inappropriate tiny elegy of ash. Three enigmatic masks.

The speaker brings out empathically the loneliness of Madame Edwards's existence:

> One could tell
> At once how long she must have sat alone,
> Sad lady, with the back of her fauteuil
> Turned to the uncommunicative view
> Of drear palatial faubourg roofs displayed
> Between portentous casement draperies,
> There in that room the hotel's master had
> But seldom entered.

She had come down to greet them in the mezzanine:

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[60] There is, too, an uncharacteristically high incidence of compound words used in this poem.

Stepped
With lifted dress-train held bunched at the knees
Into the ivory-panelled gilt-grilled lift;
Dismissed her maid on reaching the third floor
And shown us down a quite dark passage, hung
With glass-masked pastels –Redon, Morisot, maybe, -
To her most private salon

where the speaker's eye is caught by 'a Degas statuette,/A hand-high Rodin piece; upon the wall/Above the fireplace, a nice Géricault -'. The works of art 'were almost exactly as described' (*INCP*, p.xx). 'Innocence and Experience' contains an association of images and references to the theatre and to a portrait painted by Augustus John which Gascoyne has explained elsewhere.[61] However, the poem represents, too, a critique of the world of private art collectors who own paintings which no one sees: they are 'wasted, these valuable paintings which ought to be available for everyone to look at because too often reproductions lie,' said Gascoyne (*MDI*, p.31).[62] He communicates this implicitly in the final line: 'God gives us all, yet no one asks/What it is given for...'. At the same time, as in 'A Vagrant', Gascoyne is also criticising bourgeois society. He is lower middle class by birth and upbringing, he told Duclos, but considers himself to be classless; however, he admits to having a conscience about it, because he has read Marx and Engels (*MDI*, p.32).

A second section in ***A Vagrant*** styled, self-deprecatingly, 'Make-Weight Verse',[63] comprises seven light pieces, three of which: 'An Unsagacious Animal or The Triumph of Art Over Nature', 'The Decay of Decency' and 'With a Cornet of Winkles', are fully developed. The 'Three Cabaret Songs' include one (unidentified) which is all that remains of Gascoyne's satirical one-act play, *The Hole in the Fourth Wall*, produced in 1950.[64] The gentle humour and self-mocking note, both 'humanizing and reinforcing' (*PGDG*, p.146) in these poems, provide a counter to the gravity and visionary quality of

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[61] See footnote 58.

[62] He agrees with his friend, Georges Duthuit, critic and specialist in Byzantine and Abstract Expressionist art, who has attacked Malraux's *Musée Imaginaire* in his book *La Musée Inimaginable.*

[63] Not included in the ***Collected Poems*** (1965), but restored to the ***Collected Poems 1988***, and to ***Selected Poems*** (1996) under the heading 'Light Verse'.

[64] Gascoyne does not name the song, but it seems likely that he is referring to the second, 'What a Way to Walk into my Parlour, Little Man!' since a draft of the poem with a different heading, 'Cabaret Song: De Haut en Bas' appears on two pages in Notebook IV. *The Hole in the Fourth Wall*, produced by Elizabeth Sprigge, ran for three weeks at the Watergate Theatre in London, from 1st March 1950. Neither the author's original typescript not any of the ten 'acting' copies has survived. I am indebted for this information to Colin Benford's *David Gascoyne: A Bibliography of his Works 1929-1985* (Ryde, Isle of Wight: Heritage Books, 1985), p.101.

so much of Gascoyne's significant verse. Gascoyne has often included 'An Unsagacious Animal' with evident enjoyment in the various poetry readings I have attended.[65]

There is no critical consensus on Gascoyne's achievement in *A Vagrant*. Hugh Haughton, for instance, places *Miserere* and the 'Metaphysical' poems in the previous collection 'alongside, in Europe, *Four Quartets*, Auden's *New Year Letter* and H.D.'s *Trilogy* and Wallace Stevens's *Parts of a World*', but argues that Gascoyne 'never matched these poems of personal and spiritual crisis again'. Poems such as 'The Post-War Night' and 'Fragments towards A Religio Poetae' are 'strained echoes of an already strained poetic response to that crisis'.[66] Tolley refers to 'the increasingly plain and often flat poetry of *A Vagrant*' (*ATTPOF*, p.148).[67] However, the empathic response of five fellow poets is different: Gavin Ewart finds the tone of the poems in that volume 'more conversational, less strained' (*GEVFD*, p.92); Sisson encounters a 'delicate, sure touch [which] is felt more consistently' (*SEP*, p.258); while Thomas Blackburn believes that 'Gascoyne has written verse which shows wit, tenderness and insight, and is much more relaxed than in his earlier work'.[68] Raine writes approvingly: 'Each poem is made round some concrete moment of experience, but belongs when made, beyond all question to the world of perfected art' (*KJRAV*, p.633). Edwin Muir, in a contemporary review, focuses on the question of language: 'No poet of his generation abuses English so little or uses it with more precision and felicity than Mr Gascoyne. This is due in part, perhaps, to his sense of the permanent in human experience, for that makes utterance simple and unaffected. In this volume he deals chiefly with contemporary life, but his imagination, while deeply concerned with that life, passed straight through it to the permanent. That, indeed, it may be plain, is the only way in which the contemporary can be illuminated and given a meaning beyond itself' (*EMAV*, p.111). Gascoyne 'usually speaks in his natural voice in organic form,' writes Brian Merrikin-Hill, '(as understood by Herbert Read), making language a flexible medium – rhetorical as in "Ecce Homo", naturally but indubitably celebrant as in "The Sacred Hearth", conversationally and anecdotally

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[65] Ewart writes that 'An Unsagacious Animal' is 'a poem that, though many people might turn away from it as "light verse", is as full of calculated menace, and certainly as well written as any of Mr Gascoyne's more pretentious poetry. Here at last, the Victorian phrases, used as parody, seem absolutely right.' He ends his review by quoting the whole poem (*GEVFD*, p.93).

[66] Review of ***Selected Poems*** in *London Review of Books* (25 January 1996), p.15.

[67] In a generally appreciative notice, the anonymous reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* comments: 'These poems are deliberate, neutral-toned, taut, rarely vigorous': 'Images of Loneliness' (Friday, January 12 1951), p.18. Further citings as (*IOL*).

[68] *The Price of an Eye* (Longmans, 1961), p.135.

assured in "Innocence and Experience" in a style reminiscent of Henry James [...]. An occasional poem on the sun in a park ["September Sun: 1947"] can attain a pure splendour of speech, while irony and satire also succeed in "Demos in Oxford Street" and "Beware Beelzebub"" (*BMHT*, p.282). The *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer considers that 'several of the poems incline towards dramatic speech. The idiom suits him; the reader perceives often in this volume a sensibility completely realized through a direct, controlled verse'. Later in the article, he adds perceptively: 'Mr Gascoyne draws his strength from his ability to leave round each image only the barest of sense impressions. [...] This bareness of diction, this refusal to riot in sensuous imagery, is beautifully justified especially when it revivifies by its very austerity the most venerable of poetic symbols – the sun, the "unkempt rose" of "A Tough Generation", or the wood of "wood-hiding trees" of "The Sacred Hearth"" (*IOL*, p.18).[69]

Certainly the poems collected in ***A Vagrant*** are, in the main, demonstrably different from those in ***Poems 1937-42***, but if both poet and circumstances had changed, the fundamental theme remains: the responsibility of the poet and his role in society. 'He is,' says Raine, 'for man against all economic or mental tyrannies whether of Church or State; and man for him is not the material man of present-day capitalism and Socialism, but the divine humanity of the Kingdom of Heaven' (*KJRP*, p.65). Gone is the prodigious facility with language and poetic output that Gascoyne had enjoyed in the thirties and early forties; he believes today that his amphetamine abuse brought about a premature reduction of creative powers. The immediate post-war years offered disillusionment in place of the hoped-for 'new' world. However, while the lack of the former characteristic intensity is noticeably absent in the majority of these poems,[70] and given that there is at times an unevenness in the diction, providing at a first reading something of a disappointment, the conviction grows after closer study that ***A Vagrant*** represents another stage in Gascoyne's poetic sensibility and development. Schmidt identifies in Gascoyne's work as a whole a 'unity that is not imposed but seems to rise out of the poems. They cohere as aspects of a developing vision' (*MSI*, p.287). Skelton, too, responds positively to 'the long colloquial lines and the subtle cadences in this collection

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[69] On the same page, the 'Critics' Choice for 1950' includes ***A Vagrant*** in the choice of ten books of the past year.

[70] Raine agrees: 'The present volume is less sombre in intensity than some of the poems' in Gascoyne's previous collection (*KJRP*, p.65).

[which] revealed that Gascoyne had taken a further step forward and, as usual, perfected new modes of exploration'.[71] ***A Vagrant*** offers genuine variety in subject matter and structure; Gascoyne's confident experiments with different techniques, and his selection of verse form and metre, point to the culmination of his earliest attempts in this field in ***Roman Balcony***. As a practising poet herself, Raine acknowledges that 'his long free lines carry sprung rhythm to its extreme development in which the line and not the foot is the unit into which as many syllables are packed as can be accommodated in a given time interval.' This feature, she remarks, is 'highly characteristic and imparts a sense of overflowing urgency' (*KJRAV*, p.633).

For Philip Gardner, one of the most perceptive of Gascoyne's commentators, the majority of the poems in ***A Vagrant*** 'facing a post-war world of disappointing mediocrity, accommodate in the fluid intricacy of their sometimes rambling lines a range of feelings from indignation through self-doubt to a resigned gentleness'. He continues, and it would be difficult to disagree: 'Like 'A Sacred Hearth', many poems in ***A Vagrant*** transmit a quiet inner beauty one would call mellow, if that word did not carry overtones of a temperament too easily satisfied. Perhaps one may suggest their spiritual quality by saying that they convey a new acceptance of human limitation, a reconciliation [...] with the need for patience in the quest for "life, more life, new life"'. Gardner, too, acknowledges what he calls 'a certain relaxing of emotional tension[72] [...] in the main compensated for by new subtleties of rhythm, especially in the deft handling of long colloquial lines, and by the wry, half-smiling tolerance of self and others, which argues an advance in maturity' (*PGDG*, p.146).

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[71] 'Introduction' to *David Gascoyne: Collected Poems* (Oxford University Press, 1965).
[72] Perkins observes that Gascoyne 'deliberately loosened his style' (*HMP*, p.181).

When the words in the city are full of savagery and lies, nothing speaks louder than the unwritten poem.' George Steiner: 'Silence and the Poet'.

Encounter With Silence: Poems 1950, published in 1998,[73] comprises a selection drawn from an orange manuscript Notebook, *Poems, 1950*, which has been for some years in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library. The catalogue description reads: '31 holograph poems, unsigned, 66p. (Bd. 25cms.). Contains translations and some prose passages'. It seemed before my visit to America in 1997 that these must represent no more than the draft pages of ***A Vagrant and other poems***, rather than any new or forgotten work. However, my assumption was proved wrong.

The relationship of these *Poems, 1950* to the collection ***A Vagrant and other poems***, brought out by John Lehmann in that same year, is both interesting and problematic. David Gascoyne himself has no recollection of the notebook which contains drafts of two of the poems in the Lehmann publication: 'A Tough Generation', and 'Three Venetian Nocturnes', together with 'Sentimental Colloquy' which like 'Elegiac Improvisation. In honour of Paul Eluard' (sic), was not published until four years later.[74] The poem 'Recitative from an Oratorio in Commemoration of the Dead' was later published in 1959 as 'Remembering the Dead'.[75] In addition to several unpublished poems and translations, and light verse (in the vein of the 'Make-Weight Verse' in ***A Vagrant***), there are fragments, and half-completed, never developed plans. The chosen selection echoes in miniature the format of ***A Vagrant*** in that original poems are followed by translations and light verse. However, another section is added after the translations, offering two versions of a poem neither of which was completed, begun at different times during the forties.

Section I comprises: 'Give Up Dead Words'; 'Stele'; 'Terminal'; 'Fragment from an Unfinished/Unpublished Poem'; 'Untitled'; 'Saturnalia'.[76] Section II contains versions of two poems by Pierre Reverdy: 'Players' and 'The Same Number', translations of Jules

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[73] Edited and introduced by Roger Scott (Enitharmon Press).

[74] In the *Times Literary Supplement*, No.2722 (April 2nd 1954), p.215. The homage to the French poet, written after Gascoyne learnt of his death when he returned to England from the USA and Canada, was first published as 'Elegiac Improvisation on the Death of Paul Eluard' in *Botteghe Oscure*, XIII (1954), pp.118-21.

[75] In *X*, Vol.1, no.1 in November of that year.

[76] It seems almost certain that 'Saturnalia' represents Gascoyne's incomplete version of a projected poem, 'Under Saturn' listed under 'A Vagrant & Other Poems' in notebook II (1950).

Supervielle's 'To Lautréamont' and René Char's 'After Detonation Silence'. The last section includes three brief, humorous poems: 'A Post-Card from Venice to T.S.E.',[77] 'Who Are the Orthosexual?' and 'L'homme assez moyen', preceded in a third section by 'The Anchorite' and 'The Bomb-Site Anchorite'.[78] Gascoyne's original plan for and first draft of 'The Anchorite', dating from Spring-Summer 1941, are published here for the first time, together with the later fragment written then abandoned c.1948/9, according to the poet. What he has to say about 'The Bomb-Site Anchorite'[79] is particularly relevant to ***A Vagrant and other Poems***, and to matters such as tone and Gascoyne's state of mind:

> '[...] My reluctance to give any definite expression of my persistent residue of faith resulted in the fragmentary nature of the 'Religio Poetae' section of ***A Vagrant***, and prevented me from elaborating the kind of discourse it would have been appropriate for my anchorite to deliver to the impartial narrator of my poem. Awareness of the pitfalls besetting specifically philosophical poetry inhibited me from risking the completion of this particular poem altogether.' [80]

Encounter With Silence contains in a real sense poems recovered from limbo: they had remained silent, unable to communicate for some forty-seven years. The title is mine, appropriated from that of Section 3 of ***Night Thoughts***. Silence, a recurring theme, is addressed in three unpublished poems from the 1930s: 'Compline for the Occident, a cantata for choir and solo voice':

> *First voice*:
>
> To be
> The first voice, and to break
> The Silence, and to say
> O speak

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[77] This poem chimes with another short (complete) unpublished poem in orange notebook I, 'Dear Thomas Eliot (let's suppress the Stearns)/Your fame no longer needs, and make this rhyme):/There is no hell-fire where a martyr burns./Stern flesh rejoices to be cleansed in lime'.

[78] The title, 'The Bombed-Site [sic] Anchorite' appears in orange notebooks II and III in the British Library: first under the heading of 'A Vagrant and Other Poems', then in III under Twelve Future Books, one of which is 'New Poems (The Bombed-Site Anchorite & other poems)'; however, the title poem is crossed out in the list 'Contents, Poems 1950'. In notebook IV, 'The Bomb [sic]-Site Anchorite' appears under 'Notes, projects, rough drafts for poems', together with 'Religio Poetae', 'Zodiak for K.J.R. (6 poems)', and the titles of three poems that were never written: 'Ardour', 'Excalibur', and 'The Green Heart of London' for which there is a quite detailed plan in the Berg notebook.

[79] This was published for the first time in *An Enitharmon Anthology for Alan Clodd*, edited by Stephen Stuart-Smith (Enitharmon Press, 1990), p.23, with a note by Gascoyne about the uncompleted poem on the facing page.

[80] The character was invented by Gascoyne 'in order to give utterance through him to my own meditations on the question as to whether it is possible any longer to envisage the divine in the second half of the 20th century' (Op. cit.).

Now, voices of the speechless in
My voice: O let me be
More than the voice
Of a young man alone
In a suburban bedroom, writing verse
More than the mere
Articulation of ephemeral despair.

the long 'automatic' Surrealist poem, 'The Perpetual Explosion': '[...] And the home of dusk turns onto its/side in the echo of chaotic/magnetism determined to search the/ further brink of silence [...]';[81] and in the second stanza of 'The Entrance to that valley stands alone'[82] :

If a voice speaks, it is your voice which speaks;
There are no others here. You here
Your other self, whose accents cold, in pity
Breaking or in pleading torn, implore, placate
The endless finite silence; and the single dead
Echo of that one voice, a pebble dropped
Into the black depths of a well, will not
Receive another answer, though your wish may be
To have to speak no longer, nor to hear.

Silence is explored in several poems, both complete and unfinished, in the Berg notebook, and Gascoyne chose to translate Char's 'After Detonation Silence'.[83] Apart from 'Give Up Dead Words', 'Stele' and 'Terminal', published here for the first time, there are fragments which also engage with the state of being silent or unable to speak, as in 'Silence in Heaven' which begins:

To be as nothing, being unable to speak

and the incomplete draft, 'Silence on Earth':

[...] Cramped in a rambling house
With blinded windows
Assailed by constant sounds
On the edge of an abyss
How can one speak
Or know what to say?

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[81] In Add.56043 in the British Library.

[82] This poem has since been published by Enitharmon Press, with my brief introduction, in late September 2001 for Gascoyne's 85th birthday on October 10th. Throughout the nineteen forties, the poet considered a dramatic project that was assigned various titles: 'Bride of Quietness'; 'Hostages of Silence'; 'Silent Hostage'; 'The Bride of Silence'; 'Prisoners of Silence (a play in three acts)'. See, for example, Add.62946, pp.45-46.

[83] Gascoyne published translations by Supervielle, Reverdy and Char both before and after these versions, in print here for the first time.

In 'Untitled', the speaker is anguished:

> The heart's pain
> Knows no remittance
> I who know no-one
> Am turning a stranger
> Have long been too silent
> Shall stay silent longer.

'Stele' and 'Terminal' together with 'Give Up Dead Words', represent what seems to be an altogether darker vision. Michael Hamburger's response to the photocopies I sent him before their publication is illuminating: 'The gloom that has always been attributed to me as a poet is twilight compared with that of these poems of David's'.[84] There are examples of this darker aspect and of a bleak irony in some of the verses in *A Vagrant*, as I have indicated, and it is arguable that Gascoyne was resisting the incursion of this element in his work at this time, and that he deliberately omitted the three poems from those he sent to John Lehmann. Nevertheless, Kathleen Raine's reaction was very different when she received copies: 'These poems are beautiful [...]'. She agreed on the relevance of the title I had chosen for the collection: 'The theme of silence in these manuscript poems is fundamental – an eloquent silence, as it will be understood in the future.'[85]

Gascoyne has continued to explore the conditions of writing itself, the ways in which writing is located in and by a culture, where it can exert influence or be simply marginal, ignored. At the same time, he is concerned to address the nature of language[86] and to ask whether it still has validity or whether silence must be the choice of the writer. Hamburger observes that 'The truth of poetry, and of modern poetry especially, is to be found not only in its direct statements but in its peculiar difficulties, short cuts, silences, hiatuses and fusions.' He is talking here about what he perceives to be a 'degree of alienation from language, even as a medium of simple communication' that 'has become more and more widespread in "advanced societies".' 'Non-articulation' may well be the result of the 'word-scepticism' he sees underlying many of the 'practices' of modern poetry.[87] Raine writes in another letter about Gascoyne and silence: 'It is an encounter

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[84] In a letter to me dated 9/2/98. He adds: 'They help one to understand why he has always worked on the brink of silence.'

[85] In a letter to me dated February 20th 1998.

[86] He quotes both Hölderlin and Heidegger on the significance of language in (*DGEN*), p.24.

[87] *The Truth of Poetry* (Anvil Press Poetry Ltd. 1998), p.41. In one of the orange notebooks c.1950, I found two separate and somewhat enigmatic jottings relating to silence: 1. 'Silence. Shutupness. The daemonic testimony withheld/Refusal of acknowledgement. Tacit negativity. Unspoken falsehood./

which has lasted a life-time and which speaks silently for the generation for whom the second world war and the holocaust was their determining moment in Europe's appalling history. [...] The poet does not simply undergo history, or observe it, but lives it, as David did and was one of its casualties'.[88] In his important essay, 'Silence and the Poet', George Steiner notes that 'there is a widespread intimation, though as yet only vaguely defined, of a certain exhaustion of verbal resources in modern civilization, of a brutalization and devaluation of the word, in the mass-cultures and mass-politics of the age'.[89]

At the end of the forties, Gascoyne had to contend with his post-war disillusionment, neurasthenia, the unrelieved nagging of accusatory inner voices which had to be silenced,[90] and he was still trying to come to terms with the virtual disappearance of the verbal facility he had enjoyed throughout the thirties and the early years of the war. He was, too, beginning to recognize painful signs of the silence that can be enforced by 'writer's block'[91], and there was for him the unavoidable question, that faced by Samuel Beckett, too,[92] in the post-war condition: is the living truth no longer sayable, capable of utterance? Many years later, in a rare occasional poem, Gascoyne would confront the choice as a writer to be silent, the route taken by his early hero Arthur

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Silence, confidence, acceptance of transcendence, realization of temporal and approximate, limited and partly confusing nature of all verbal communication. Faith in reciprocity. Deliberate repose. Fulfilment.' 2. 'Equivocal evasion of theological conclusions in Platonic idealist approach to "problem of Being", beyond a certain point. Silence eventually equivalent to dissimulation./Notion of silence in H[eidegger]. Two experiences of silence. Anguish – plenitude. Wrath or bliss pre or post articulate silence.' (no pag.).

88 In a letter sent November 9th 1998.

89 *Language and Silence. Essays 1958-1966* (Faber & Faber, 1967), p.65. Further citings as (*GSSAP*).

90 'Yes, You!': '[...] Be assured that the silence which/Preceded and follows you is overwhelmingly/Vast and deep and just'. In 'Guilt By Association', her review of *Painted Shadow: A Life of Vivienne Eliot* by Carole Seymour-Jones, Hermione Lee observes that T.S. Eliot 'wrote a prayer for himself which ran, in part, "Protect him from the Voices/Protect him from the Visions/Protect him from the tumult/Protect him in the silence".': *Times Literary Supplement* (November 30 2001), p.3.

91 A very real and urgent problem when he returned from the USA and Canada in 1952 and was commissioned by Douglas Cleverdon to produce a script for the BBC Third Programme.

92 In his trilogy, *Malloy, Malone dies, The Unnamable*, Beckett speaks of words used as labels and asserts that language like this is 'this long sin against the silence that enfolds us' (London: Pan 1979), p.345. In *The Unnamable*, as Paul Davies points out, 'its self tries to find itself in speech, fails, and hopes for nothing more than to go silent': 'Three Novels and four "Nouvelles"' in *The Cambridge Companion to Beckett* (Cambridge University Press 1994,1996), p.60. Elsewhere in the trilogy, Beckett's characters attack language as 'clatter', 'fatuous clamour', a 'frenzy of utterance' (pp.177). Gascoyne told me that he met Beckett several times after the war in Paris in Georges Duthuit's studio, and talked with him in the week when *En Attendant Godot* was first performed. 'He was always very friendly and pleasant, but I didn't see as much of him as I might have done, because I respected his privacy'. He had come to know Beckett in the first instance through their mutual friend George Reavey.

Rimbaud who renounced poetry, or the very condition forced upon Hölderlin[93]: 'Speechlessness' was written after the murder of Lord Mountbatten by the IRA:[94]

'Words, words, words': Impatience or despair?
Mere wornout husks, devalued coinage, 'strain,
Crack and sometimes break...'
'Decay with imprecision.'
'What can one say?' asks everyone.
Some withering wreaths: Imperishable memories?
Such is our ever-increasing impotence
In this our more and more blood-reeking world.
Is silence therefore really best?
Even a poet can no longer say.

Steiner points to the situation of a writer who may feel that 'the condition of language is in question, that the word may be losing something of its humane genius'. One of the choices he faces is 'the suicidal rhetoric of silence' (*GSSAP*, p.69). The title, 'Give Up Dead Words' addresses these issues:

Salt sea can swallow all who thirst
while our vocabulary
On losing its once saline virtue's not become
more fresh
With froth-flecked lips we mouth
our pithy apothegms and try
Not to put on thereby too great a weight
for our frail flesh.

There is an unusual precision in form and diction, and a certain bleakness of vision; no radiance here. 'Stele' and 'Terminal' appear on facing pages in the Berg notebook:

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[93] Steiner: 'Hölderlin's silence has been read not as a negation of his poetry but as, in some sense, its unfolding and its sovereign logic. [...] so the void places in Hölderlin's poems, particularly in the late fragments, seem indispensable to the completion of the poetic act' (*GSSAP*, p.67).

[94] Written August-September 1979, published in *The Listener* (4th October 1979). In 'Prelude to a New Fin-de-Siècle', first published in Italy in *Nuova Rivista Europea*, No.19-20 (October-December 1980), then in *Temenos* II (1982), he writes: '[...] But now as in the Thirties I can once again/Feel passion and frustration and that sense/Of expectation, imminence and pressing need/To express something that just must be said./Mature awareness knows that poetry/Today demands the essence and the minimum;/That only Silence such as God's could say the Whole./One stark vocabulary at least remains./The litany of lurid headline-names [...]'.

STELE

The most enduring final statement
Is the silence we don't hear.
It digests everything.

Silence that's never known this side of death.
Try for a moment to experience it.
You may hear Nothing; but that's not the Silence.

For Nothing just makes its own unquiet noise,
A sort of famished gasping in the eardrums.
An ever-ending syllable of suppressed anguish.

TERMINAL
Poetry? I too dislike it... (M. Moore)

The most enduring massive statement
Is the silence no-one hears
It sums up everything.

There is no silence on this side of death.
Listen to any muted moment
When all is quiet. You will not hear it.

Yet it is under all and overhead
Not less indubitable than the firmament.
It is itself the Word.

It affords vast relief

To recollect that it is being spoken
Making inept all tongues that would compete.

They are interdependent texts,[95] compelling in their concision, their hieratic tone, the pared-down diction and bareness of imagery. Not a word is wasted. Gascoyne is writing two versions of the same kind of poem: an epigraph or inscription, a meditation on the poet and the silence which 'is itself the Word',[96] and on the debased coinage of language. Both poems offer a steely rejection of any false consolation. I have used the word 'epigraph' quite deliberately. First, because of Gascoyne's choice of 'Stele' for the title of the first poem: the Chambers *Twentieth Century Dictionary* (1968) refers to 'an upright stone slab or tablet'. The Collins *English Dictionary* (1992) is more explicit: 'an upright stone slab or column decorated with figures or inscriptions'. Secondly, and more immediately relevant, is the fact that one of the 1950 orange notebooks includes the draft of an introduction to the French poet, Victor Segalen (1878-1919), beginning: 'The *Stèles* of Victor Segalen is undoubtedly a neglected book [...]. To me, I must say, it is worth all the poetry Claudel ever wrote (with the exception of "Cinq Grands Odes" perhaps)'. He goes on to emphasize 'the virtues of compression and reticence displayed' in *Stèles* [1912] some of which 'I feel I can identify myself with in every word' (no pag.).[97]

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[95] Both characters, Malloy and Malone, comment early in Beckett's trilogy on the nature of silence and its hearability: 'the noise you hear when you really listen, when all seems hushed [...] the far unchanging noise the earth makes and which other noises cover' (Op.cit. p.46). This is an intriguing parallel.

[96] Steiner quotes Brice Parain: 'Language is the threshold of silence'; and Henri Lefebvre: Silence 'is at once inside the language, and on its near and far sides' (*GSSAP*, p.72).

[97] 'Dare I undertake to set myself the task of translating all the 68 pieces that *Stèles* contains?' His brief attempts to translate 'From the Far Distance' he finds unsatisfactory in a critical note on the facing page. According to William Rees, the *Stèles*, 'haunting, elliptical, magical prose-poems are inspired by Chinese mythology'. They are based 'on the Chinese literary and religious tradition of the epigraph inscribed on a stone pillar, which has a round hole through which the eye of the sky may see': *The Penguin Book of French Poetry 1820-1950*, selected, translated and introduced by William Rees

Gascoyne's acknowlegement of the Modernist liking for masks has already been noted in regard to 'Innocence and Experience' in *A Vagrant.* 'Saturnalia' is a bleak response to the human condition in contemporary urban society, reflecting the constant blare and din of everyday living, the anxiety and alienation, the necessary adoption of masks to hide our vulnerability, the false values:

> Beneath broad sunlight bent and sweating, chilled
> In spite of all our garments by the zero underneath
> Upon perdition pondering, rehearsing inwardly
> Long rigmaroles of self-defence and calumny, we go
> The tortuous hard way towards uncertainty out of
> The pit of ages. Harsh is our music. Masks
> Like snail-shells are become the smooth and whorled
> Concealment we excrete to hide our softness from ourselves.
> We shake if silence falls like withered leaves, we fall
> A-shaking in mid-winter's silent blast: therefore great noise
> We used always to quieten us, crescendo of uproar
> To trample down all elegiac echoes, cog-wheels, clogs,
> Bad bells and beating blades and drums, drums, bleating tongues
> To blend in undertone behind/beneath the screech distorting speech
> With falsehood's rising passion for dominion over all.

In the unpublished fragment, 'The Rahjah's [sic] Rite', the wearing of masks is again an accepted requirement for living:

> [...] And all we, merchant, clerk, comedian,
> Housewife and handy-man, shopkeeper and whore,
> Teacher and business-woman, soldier sailor, all
> Must wear the same mask of disguise: a smile
> To reassure the inquisition that we are employable,
> A cloak of small-talk, and a shield of brass
> To hide too shifty eyes/To draw across the eyes, when it's
> expedient,and gloves
> Of skintight antiseptic scepticism, lest
> Our getting too involved leaves the palms stained ...

David Gascoyne's preoccupation with the city which first surfaced in several poems in his first collection, ***Roman Balcony and other poems*** (1932), developed through the thirties, and into the forties, most strongly in 'Noctambules' and 'Phantasmagoria'. (It is clear from early forties notebooks that he had planned to write a long poem called initially 'The City By Night', then 'Benighted in Babylon', and revised to 'The Babylonian Night'). This theme of the existential city was to reach its final expression in the fifties. Following 'The Post-War Night' in *A Vagrant*, the 'Fragment of

(Penguin Books, 1990, 1992), p.500. Rees translates 'L'Abîme'/'The Abyss': its dark vision is in keeping with the tone of the three texts on which I have just commented.

an Unfinished/Unpublished Poem' in ***Encounter With Silence*** represents another attempt by the poet to examine his vision of the modern metropolis, - '(here all wear masks)'- and pre-dates the 'radiophonic poem' ***Night Thoughts*** (1956), commissioned in 1953 by Douglas Cleverdon of the BBC Third Programme, not long after Gascoyne had returned from the USA and Canada.

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Assessing Gascoyne's achievement in ***A Vagrant and other poems***, Kathleen Raine asserted that 'he has attempted something more, perhaps, than any other poet of his generation, something perhaps beyond his capacities' [...]. It 'is no doubt an intermediate collection between the 1942 [sic] volume, and whatever maturity may, or may not, crown a rare and dedicated talent' (*KJRAV*, pp.632,633). In the *Times Literary Supplement*, the reviewer considered that 'The temper of his [Gascoyne's] new poems is very different from that of his early *surréalisme* or of the wartime *Miserere* sequence, and may appear in retrospect as characteristic of the half-decade since 1945 as his *surréalisme* is of one aspect at least of the thirties' (*IOL*, p.18). Following a commentary on 'A Vagrant', Anthony Cronin states that 'A handful of the other poems in this volume are among the most successful that have been written by any poet of what I suppose we must call again the post-Auden generation' (*ACPL*, p.55).

Gascoyne left this country for America in the autumn of 1951, together with Raine and W.S. Graham; as 'three younger British poets' they presented a series of poetry readings in New York and certain of the North East States. When he returned, he would face the rapid onset of 'writer's block', complete nevertheless his pamphlet *Thomas Carlyle* (1952) for the British Council series 'Writers and their Work', and his last major work, ***Night Thoughts*** (1956). Over the next twenty-five years he was to suffer from manic depression, schizophrenia and paranoia, and three or four serious breakdowns requiring hospitalization and stays in mental institutions, before his marriage to Judy Lewis whose vital - and revitalizing - influence and devotion have been so crucial in the

years following. He has written poems only very intermittently,[98] no more than twenty since *A Vagrant*.

Looking back now over the past fifty years it is, of course, clear that David Gascoyne's major poetic work with the exception of *Night Thoughts* had been completed with the publication of *A Vagrant and other poems* at the close of the forties. He has always considered himself to be an underachiever. However, Anthony Cronin's perceptive summary of Gascoyne's achievement remains as valid now as it was when it first appeared in the *London Magazine* in 1957: 'Gascoyne is [...] a poet with a vision of human society, its corruption and its possibilities of redemption, passionately concerned with the true nature and conditions of human liberty' (*ACPI*, p.55).[99]

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[98] In the ***Collected Poems*** (1965), there were only two new poems, both written in the first half of the fifties: 'Sentimental Colloquy' and 'Elegiac Improvisations on the Death of Paul Eluard'.

[99] This chapter was completed shortly before news of David's death on Sunday, 25th November 2001 reached me. My obituary, somewhat 'mauled' in the opening paragraphs by *The Times* staff, appeared on Wednesday, 28th November, with the crucial emphasis on the spiritual in his life and work, its religious element, removed.

Afterword

One of the last remaining survivors of the nineteen thirties, David Gascoyne died on November 25th 2001 aged 85 on the Isle of Wight, before the completion of this thesis. He bore an exceptional witness to European culture over nearly seventy years. Like Giacometti, who also renounced his own Surrealist phase, Gascoyne was among all writers, artists and sculptors of his time the most attuned to the spiritual ambience of the age; both men looked to existentialist philosophy to find an accommodation with the agonising problems of being.

Gascoyne's was a unique voice. Donald Hall contends that he 'remains the English author who has most absorbed the experiments of the modern movement in France'.[100] Gascoyne wrote in his journals that 'I belong to Europe before I belong to England'. His was a truly European sensibility; like T.S. Eliot, Gascoyne's verse reflects the presence of 'the mind of Europe'. Philippe Soupault once described him to Kathleen Raine as 'a French poet writing in English', acknowledging Gascoyne's extraordinary sympathy with France and French poetry and poets. So much more than avant-garde theoretician and practitioner of Surrealism in the thirties, he was continually being re-discovered by successive generations, and the full scope and significance of his lifetime's work as distinguished poet, translator, critic and memoirist became apparent in the publications of the 1990s.

His poetry is essentially religious, and so important in this new century because he articulates the human condition profoundly but yet with such visionary clarity, wrestling with the pain consistent with living in the modern world. One of Gascoyne's constant themes is 'The hollowness of the world without a spiritual dimension', his concern to confront what he terms 'spiritual night'. He understood only too well through his own experience the real meaning of despair. Gascoyne's was an unfashionable, but unquenchable yearning to rehabilitate the spirit in an apparently godless world, a striving to create himself what Carlyle called 'an inspired Poesy and Faith for Man'.

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[100] Entry on Gascoyne in *Concise Encyclopaedia of English & American Poets and Poetry*, (eds.) Stephen Spender & Donald Hall (London: Hutchinson, 1970).

He remained, as always, strong in spirit, a man of warmth, generosity, above all of integrity with a gentle humanity. Modest to the point of self-deprecation, he was disappointed that he had not written as much as he might have wished. We are all, particularly those of us who knew and loved him, the poorer for his passing. Already his death, like that of his friend, Roger Roughton, of whom he wrote so movingly, ('An Elegy') seems 'like a clumsy wound that will not heal'.

* * *

Appendix 1: Chronology of David Gascoyne's Life & Work

1916
October 10th: born in Harrow, Middlesex, living initially in Caton Road. Father, Leslie Noel, worked in a bank; mother, Winifred Isabel Emery, a 'frustrated actress' according to DG. Childhood and youth peripatetic because of father's transfers and promotions. Lived for short periods in Edinburgh.

1918
Father demobilized, 'adjudged too delicate to be sent to the Front'. Moved to Salisbury where twins, John and Tony, were born, then to Fordingbridge in Hampshire. Father now manager of Midland Bank there.

1922
First piano lessons with Miss Pitt. Brought up as a Protestant, though parents agnostics.

1924-1930
Attended Salisbury Choir School as boarder and chorister at Salisbury Cathedral. Most powerful emotional experience there was participating in *The Dream of Gerontius*. First poems printed in *St. Osmund's Magazine* in 1929 and 1930. In early teens, frequently saw 'R.F.W.' or 'Tiny' Wright, nicknamed 'Ginger' in her rooms in a house owned by Alida Monro: 'She became my first and dearest friend'. Bought E.A. Poe's *Tales* at 13: confiscated by master at the school. Taken at 14 to Harold and Alida Monro's bookshop in Bloomsbury where he heard T.S. Eliot read poems by Christina Rossetti. At 15 acquired Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*.

1930
Voice broke. Family moved to East Twickenham in London, where father transferred to head office, eventually to become the Midland Bank chief cashier. Once in London, DG often visited home of one of father's relatives, playing Satie and Schönberg on the piano. He began to read Marx, Freud, Spengler and 'became an atheist, or thought I was'. Left school 'having proved hopeless exam-fodder'. Monro's anthology, *Twentieth-Century Poetry*, was one of the first things he read.

1930-32
Attended Regent Street Polytechnic Secondary School. George Barker, who would later become a life-long friend, left in 1930. Familiar with 'most twentieth-century poetry up to then, that of Pound, Eliot and the Imagists, and then with the exciting emergence of Auden, Spender, MacNeice'. Regular visits to Charing Cross Road and Zwemmer's Bookshop, buying back numbers of *transition* and *La Révolution surréaliste*, the Surrealist number of *This Quarter*; started to collect copies of *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* (and later *Minotaure*). Then 'I began to want to read Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Baudelaire and so on in the original'. First read *Les fleurs du mal* in Kew Gardens. Rimbaud was 'the dominant influence of my adolescence'. Went on to read 'most contemporary French poets, as well as the then available translations of Rilke, Mayakovsky, Pasternak, Lorca and other outstanding Europeans. Bought Jean Cocteau's

Opium Journal 'at Bumpus in Oxford Street, 5-10 minutes walk from the Polytechnic', and Auden's *The Orators*: thought it 'very revolutionary at the time'.

1932

May 19th: first published poem, 'Transformation Scene', appeared in *Everyman*.
September: persuaded the Temple Bar Publishing Co. Ltd. (Lincoln Williams) to publish his first collection, ***Roman Balcony and other poems***.

1933

'Something of an *annus mirabilis* for me'.
After founding *New Verse* early in the year, Geoffrey Grigson began to hold parties in the garden of his house in Keats Grove, Hampstead, for the most promising of his contributors. And DG met there, amongst others, Norman Cameron, Kathleen Raine and Charles Madge.
May: Victor Neuburg published 4 poems in the *Sunday Referee* and introduced him to Dylan Thomas. Met George Barker for the first time at David Archer's Parton Street Bookshop in Holborn, 'that miniature *carrefour* of thirties intelligentsia'.
His work began to appear in a wide range of newspapers and periodicals.
Between **July** and **November**, A.K. Orage, editor of the *New English Weekly*, published 'Hommage à Mallarmé', 'Ten Proses' and 'Surrealist Cameos' (9 prose poems). Numbers of Geoffrey Grigson's *New Verse* included DG's translations of Giacometti and Ribemont-Dessaignes.
September: publication of his 'adolescent semi-autobiographical novel' (DG), ***Opening Day***, submitted to Cobden-Sanderson by Alida Monro.
In **October**, the poem 'And the Seventh Dream is the Dream of Isis' appeared in *New Verse*, 'the result of my first attempt to produce a sequence of lines of poetry according to the orthodox Surrealist formula'.
Autumn: first visit to Paris financed largely by advanced royalties from novel. Subsequent self-recrimination: 'I was too lazy to keep a journal'. [Would write to Benjamin Fondane in 1937: 'For me it was a heady adolescent ferment of ideas, ambitions, poetry, sexual experiences, all of which now seem to me quite unreal'.] Met Cyril Connolly for the first time, as well as André Breton and Paul Eluard, and visited the *ateliers* of Zadkine, Jean Hélion, Tchelitchev, Veira da Silva and Max Ernst. Regularly went into Sylvia Beach's bookshop 'Shakespeare and Co.' where he bought a first edition of Wallace Stevens's *Harmonium*. In Montparnasse, met and fell in love 'in a cerebral and adolescent fashion' with Kay Hime. Met S.W. (Bill) Hayter and Julian Trevelyan at an exhibition of the work of Hayter and his first pupils at the Salon des Surindépendants.
December: took back to England a gouache by Ernst, 'Oiseau en fôret', and copies of recent collections by Breton, Eluard, Tristan Tzara. Back in London, Connolly often invited DG to his Chelsea flat, 312a King's Road, introducing him to Anthony Powell, Elizabeth Bowen, Henry Green and Peter Quennell.
3 poems in *Recent Poetry 1923-1933* edited by Alida Monro.

1934

DG and Hugh MacDiarmid in a 'Poets' Brains Trust' at the Unity Theatre.
January-July: contributed reviews of current West End art exhibitions and new books on painters and painting to the *New English Weekly*. In the winter of 1933-4, David Archer introduced him to Roger Roughton. Almost exact contemporaries, they 'immediately established a sympathetic rapport' and shared a flat at Great Maze Pond in Southwark for a few months. Cyril and Jeannie Connolly, Peter Quennell and Archer were among the

guests at the house-warming party, as was Julian Trevelyan whose hair caught fire. Kay Hime visited, too, as did the left-wing A.L. Lloyd. Problem of bi-sexuality was 'to become the blight of my life'. Fully aware by then that his 'sexual preferences were fundamentally ambiguous'. Financial problems, too: unable to live independently as he planned because father was paying for twins' education and the mortgage on the new home in Teddington. Cobden-Sanderson prepared to offer advance royalties of £25 for his projected new novel, 'London Bridge' (inspired by section in Eliot's *The Waste Land*), but he was unable to develop it beyond a brief outline.
January – October: a number of poems appeared in *The Listener* (2), *The Bookman* (5), *New Republic* (1), and an essay on contemporary French poetry in *Everyman*.
March 1st: poem, 'End of Peace', in *Tone: Modern Poetry*, No.3 (New York).
He contributed his 'Answer to a Questionnaire' to *New Verse* in **October** and 3 poems to the **December** number.
December: 2 poems in *The Year's Poetry 1934*, edited by Gerald Gould, John Lehmann, Denys Kilham Roberts (John Lane Lane, the Bodley Head).

1935
'Lost Wisdom' in *The Scottish Bookman*; Grigson continued to publish new poems and reviews by DG in 4 issues of *New Verse*. Second visit to Paris: frequent customer at Café Flore with George Reavey, visited Paul Eluard in the rue Legendre, then stayed for a week with Salvador Dalí and his wife Gala at their studio, translating the Spaniard's essay 'The Conquest of the Irrational' at his request: 'I saw the last days of the true Dalí'. The Surrealist, René Crevel, committed suicide at that time.
February: 'The Public Rose', review of Paul Eluard, *La rose publique* in *New Verse* 13.
Poem, 'An Impure Sky', in *The European Quarterly*, Vo.1, no.4.
June: 2 poems in *Poems of Tomorrow* (chosen from *The Listener*) by Janet Adam Smith (Chatto & Windus).
Roland Penrose was introduced to DG by some Surrealist friends in the rue de Tournon. An historic meeting: from their conversation the seeds were sown for the first International Surrealist Exhibition in London the following year. The new issue of *Cahiers d'Art* included 'Premier Manifeste Anglais du Surréalisme', a unilateral declaration in French by DG - a fragment, never completed. [Not the first Surrealist manifesto to come out in England: Edouard Roditi's 'The New Reality' had appeared in *The Oxford Outlook* in 1928.] 'The Surrealist movement [...] was no longer young, but [...] seemed to correspond to certain instincts of non-conformism and revolt which I had always recognized in myself'.
Summer: attended the International Congress of Intellectuals for the Defence of Culture Against Fascism at the Palais de la Mutualité in Paris.
November: Cobden-Sanderson published ***A Short Survey of Surrealism*** which DG had been researching in Paris in the previous months. Plates of paintings, photographs, translations by DG and Ruthven Todd of poems by Dalí, Breton, Eluard, Hugnet, Tzara, Char and Péret, and a striking dustjacket by Max Ernst.
DG's translation, *Salvador Dalí: The Conquest of the Irrational*, published in Paris and New York by Julien Levy.
December: 2 poems in *The Year's Poetry 1935*, edited by Gerald Gould, John Lehmann, Denys Kilham Roberts (John Lane, the Bodley Head).
'On Spontaneity', review of Hugh Sykes Davies, *Petron*, and Paul Eluard, *Facile*, in *New Verse* 18.

1936

January-December: poems and translations in *New Verse*, *Programme*, Roughton's *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*, and *Janus* which published his poem 'The Great Day', the only English text simulating madness. Translation of a poem by Georges Hugnet in Julien Levy's anthology, *Surrealism*.

January: met Roland Cailleux (a member of Breton's circle since 1924) at the Café Royal, and a relationship began that would develop and last until Cailleux returned to France to resume his medical practice.

February: 3 poems in Michael Roberts's *The Faber Book of Modern Verse*.

May: Archer's Parton Press published DG's second collection, ***Man's Life is this Meat***: 'With the exception of Nos.1-6, the poems in this collection are Surrealist poems'.

June: Roughton issued Benjamin Péret's *A Bunch of Carrots*, co-translated by DG and Humphrey Jennings. Censored, the book was very quickly re-titled, revised and reset as *Remove Your Hat*. Faber published DG's translation of Breton's *What is Surrealism?* As a member of the English Surrealist Group, DG contributed to various declarations and broadsides supporting the Republicans in Spain.

June 11th-July 4th: International Surrealist Exhibition, co-curated by DG, Penrose and Herbert Read, at the New Burlington Galleries in London. DG helped to rescue Dalí suffocating in a diving suit. During the summer he worked unsatisfactorily on the 'Elegiac Stanzas I.M. Alban Berg' (later written in French), 'perhaps a vague, only semi-successful attempt to find a new direction'.

July: co-translator, with Beckett, Man Ray, Denis Devlin, Eugene Jolas, Ruthven Todd and George Reavey of *Paul Eluard: Thorns of Thunder* (Europa Press).

September 19th: 'Henry Miller', review of *Tropic of Cancer* and *Black Spring*, in *Comment*, No. 39.

September 22nd: first entry recorded in the journal he would keep intermittently for the next six years. *International Surrealist Bulletin* No.4 issued, with translations by DG. He joined the Communist Party, belonged to a cell in Twickenham, and sold the *Daily Worker* outside the bus station in Hounslow. Met Antonia White: an unlikely but important relationship developed (she was 37, had had 3 husbands, 2 children and was undergoing psychoanalysis – he was 20). Norman Cameron, like Dylan Thomas, was part of the circle round her and introduced DG to modern American poetry, and to the work of Hart Crane, John Crowe Ransom and Allen Tate.

Beginning of **October**: went with Emily Coleman to the anti-Mosley demonstration, and a week later carried the Twickenham Communist branch's banner in another anti-Fascist procession: 'We were spat on'. On 13th, attended a Surrealist committee meeting at Penrose's home, and noted that Humphrey Jennings 'seems to be going to have an increased influence on my ideas'.

DG invited by Roland and Valentine Penrose to go with them to Spain where the Civil War was 3 months old. He joined them at their hotel in Montparnasse on 23rd, and they visited Christian Zervos, editor of *Cahiers d'Art*, and Paul and Nusch Eluard. DG flew with the Penroses and Zervos and his wife from Toulouse to Spain. They lived in Barcelona in a small hotel in the Plaza de Cataluňa. DG's job for the Propaganda Bureau of the Catalonian Government was to translate news bulletins during the day and then broadcast them in English each evening at 6 p.m. from a studio near the port. He encountered Tristan Tzara, heard Rafael Alberti deliver a poetry reading, met the Catalan poet J.V. Foix and visited Picasso's mother and sister. A short meeting with Emma Goldman, notorious American anarchist leader, left a strong impression.

November: returned to London via Paris where he visited Picasso in his flat in the rue de la Boétie: 'He was extremely friendly, but seemed depressed and anxious about Spain'.

The artist was suffering from a 'block', unable to paint, and had started writing poetry, some of which DG translated. DG caught the boat train and ferry on the 16th with the collection of Spanish War posters he had to deliver to meeting presided over by Fenner Brockway of the ILP. 'I continued to do a good deal of Left-wing political work; and also became associated with the formation of the movement now famous under the name of "Mass-Observation"', associated with Charles Madge and Jennings. 'For 18 months I was unable to write a line of poetry'.
December: gave lecture, 'The Future of the Lyric Imagination' at Oxford (the full text was published for the first time in ***Selected Prose 1934-1996***, edited by Roger Scott, in **1998**).
He was seeing as much of Cailleux as of Antonia White, but failed to put 'the bi-sexuality I had long perceived in myself into actual practice'.
3 poems in *The Year's Poetry 1936* (eds.) Denys Kilham Roberts and John Lehmann (John Lane, the Bodley Head).

1936-1942. The journals he kept during these 6 years (not published until **1978 and 1980**) began to follow a recognizable pattern: they present themselves as a kind of existentialist autocriticism, indulging at times in masochistic introspection, recording periods of acute emotional and spiritual crises. Projects discussed so vividly and enthusiastically remain undeveloped or incomplete.

1937-1939. He made frequent visits to France

1937
January–May: engaged on several projects, including a number of short stories with the working title *A Quiet Mind*, and a novella, ***April***, completed appropriately on April 17th.
A signatory to the English Surrealist Group's 2-sided manifesto to mark the AIA exhibition and Artists' Congress.
March: his only published short story, 'Death of an Explorer', in the anthology *Under Thirty*, edited by Michael Harrison. In his autobiographical introduction, he explained that he was working on *Diabolic Angel*, a book on Rimbaud to be published the next year, and planning three *nouvelles*, collectively called *Quiet Minds*, (only ***April*** was published, but not until **2000**). 'Death of an Explorer' was to be one of a series of short stories to be called *The Midnight Sun*' (no other stories were published).
A growing disenchantment with the Surrealist Group is very apparent in the journal entries. Took part with the group in the May Day celebration against Chamberlain and the government's non-interventionist policy.
June: confided to his journal that he thought he had fallen in love with Joan S.(cully) some weeks ago, but now 'My romantic days are over'. Roger Cailleux had been very much in his thoughts. Severely depressed; no poetry written for a year, but he was about to make one of the most crucial literary contacts of his life.
July: having read everything available on Rimbaud in the British Library Reading Room, preparatory to writing 'Diabolic Angel' on the French symbolist, he discovered Benjamin Fondane's study, *Rimbaud Le Voyou* and wrote to the French philosopher and poet who explained to him 'why Surrealism no longer satisfied me as a means of poetic expression, nor as a means of revolutionizing human subjectivity'. DG had been reading Pascal, Dostoevski, Papini and Baudelaire, Kierkegaard for the first time, and Unamuno and Chestov.
Fondane's reply led to further correspondence, and DG's letter of 11th **August** was written from 11, rue de la Bûcherie, Paris, where he shared an apartment house with E.E.

Cummings. DG and Fondane met towards the end of that summer, and a series of visits to no.6, rue Rollin followed. In late summer, settled in his Paris garret, DG went to see Henry Miller in his Villa Seurat *atelier*, and was introduced to Lawrence and Nancy Durrell: the three writers were to remain close friends until the deaths of Miller in 1980 and of Durrell ten years later. DG met Anäis Nin, and was appointed editor of *The Booster*, a review edited by Alfred Perlès, Miller and Durrell.
Summer: frequently met the South African composer, Priaulx Rainier, for lunch. He wrote and dedicated 'Mozart: Sursum Corda' to her at this time.
September: working late in the month on ***Hölderlin's Madness***, writing and translating poetry again, and developing *Blind Man's Buff*. DG speculates in his journal about his ambivalent attitude towards Breton.
October: showed first draft of 'Requiem' to Rainier (completed and given to her in 1940 to set.
In **late autumn** he made another major discovery: a copy of the 1930 edition of Pierre Jean Jouve's *Poèmes de la folie de Hölderlin*, which marked a turning-point in his own poetry, led to an excited first reading of Jouve's own poetry and prose, and to a friendship with the French poet and his psychiatrist wife that would last nearly 30 years.
November: DG's contribution to 'Sixteen Comments on Auden' published in *New Verse*, Auden Double no. 26-27. The only surviving extract from *Blind Man's Buff* appeared in *The Booster*. Signatory to the 'Declaration on Spain' in *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*. Despite contributing 3 pieces (posthumously dedicated to Jennings whose 'Reports' had influenced him) to the *Surrealist Objects and Poems* catalogue for the exhibition at the London Gallery, he was disillusioned with Surrealism, wishing 'to explore other territories than the sub- or unconscious, the oneiric and the aleatory'.
December: translation of poem by Paul Eluard in *The Year's Poetry 1937*, edited by Denys Kilham Roberts & Geoffrey Grigson (John Lane, the Bodley Head).

1938
January-April: short visit to Paris by Antonia White in January, when Anäis Nin describes in her own journal Gascoyne entering a café 'drugged'. Several poems by DG appeared in *Purpose* (3), *New Statesman and Nation* (1), *Delta* (6).
In **March** returned to Teddington for three weeks, then back in Paris. He announced his love in his journal for the young Dane, Bent von Müllen.
May: J.M. Dent brought out ***Hölderlin's Madness***, with 4 original poems interspersed with his translations. Journal entries informed by his palpable reaction to the rising tide of events on the international stage, and by a growing dismay in the face of his acute financial crisis.
July: devastated when Von Müllen left. Spent next 2½ months in the Hôtel du Vieux Pont in Grèz-sur-Loing. Attended a gathering of the International Association of Writers from the Defence of Culture against Fascism, met Louis Aragon for the first time, and found La Pasionaria 'superb'. Read Sartre's *La Nausée* and forced to speculate on his own existence. Abortive attempt to write a new novel set in London, Paris and revolutionary Barcelona.
August 9th-10th: wrote 2 poems and felt the need to revise *Despair Has Wings*. Reading new collections by Auden, Spender and MacNeice, he was aware of 'a great gap between their generation's idea of poetry and my own', but admired Auden for his mastery over words and 'the sincerity of his best utterances'.
Beginning of **September:** tried 3 cachets of opium at intervals throughout one night with 'disappointing visionary experiences'. In keeping with the best Surrealist practice, continued to record his dreams, often in vivid and disturbing detail.

Autumn: 'Kyrie' published in *Partisan Review*, Vol.VI, no.1. in section edited by D.S. Savage, 'A Little Anthology of British Poets'.
Towards the end of **October** began analysis with Mme. Jouve, Blanche Reverchon, at the rue de Tournon (where he met Pierre Leyris). Saw her every two days and had great confidence in her.
Early in **November,** DG met Tzara who asked him to translate 2 poems for *New Writing.* Unsatisfactory meeting with Roughton in Paris. Met Roger Callois and discussed Mass-Observation with him. DG read the first translation to be published in France of Heidegger's *Was Ist Metaphysik?* Under Fondane's influence, DG was developing an understanding of Existentialist Philosophy as designated by Fondane and his master Léon Chestov.
December 7th: accepted an invitation to meet Auden for tea at his hotel in Paris: found him 'much pleasanter and easier to meet than I had expected'. Heard his lecture at the Sorbonne the next day.
DG guest in Peter Watson's flat in Paris, 44 rue du Bac over Christmas. Joined by Cyril & Jean Connolly.
At the end of the year, after a fortnight's trip to the Alps, he reported that he had written a new poem, 'Snow in Europe'.
2 versions of Hölderlin in *The Year's Poetry 1938*, edited by Denys Kilham Roberts & Geoffrey Grigson (John Lane, the Bodley Head).

1939
January: still in Paris, and in analysis which finished on 22nd. Jouve sent him *Kyrie.* Back to Paris where he attended a huge *Front Populaire* meeting, then met Henry Miller in Monmartre. Final 'encounter' with Roland Cailleux: years later he regretted that he never knew 'the later Roland'. Came across 'a deeply shocked' Fondane in the snow in the Boulevard St. Michel: Chestov had just died. A letter from Von Müllen arrived: he hoped to return to Paris by September-October, but they never saw each other again.
March: DG back in Teddington with his parents. Visited Barker in Sussex. 'Digestion of Paris experiences. Peaceful inactivity'.
April: Tambimuttu published 4 poems, 'The Last Hour', 'De Profundis', 'Lachrymae', 'Ex Nihilo' in *Poetry* (London), Vol.1, no.2.
May: 'Snow in Europe' published in John Lehmann's *New Writing*, New Series II.
Early **Summer**: last meeting with Roughton.
'Mozart: Sursum Corda' in *Seven*, No.4.
August 16th-September 3rd: 'State of acute interior crisis'. DG anguishes over 'an absence of images' in his poetry. Bouts of insomnia lead to the onset of his Benzedrine addiction. Did manage to write some 'crisis' poems: 'Three Stars', 'Prophetic Mouth', 'Artist'. These poems and 'Elsewhere' sent to T.S. Eliot who was considering a collection (probably *The Open Tomb* or *The Conquest of Defeat*) for Faber.
3 poems published in *The Nineteenth Century and After.*
Autumn: 'Pieta' in *Seven*, No.6.
13th October: DG comments in his journal on 'The Alien Reality of War' signalled only by the newspapers and gas-mask boxes in 'the peace of the immediate scene'.
November: 'The Conspirators' (fragment) published in *New Writing*, New Series III.
'Ex nihilo' included in *The Best Poems of 1939*, edited by Thomas Moult (Jonathan Cape Ltd.).

1939-1945. After his return to England, stayed from time to time with friends near Bath, in south Devon, Glasgow, Oxford and East Sussex.

April 1940-July 13th 1941. DG failed to record any entries in his journal. During that time he toured with a repertory company.

1940

Over New Year introduced by Peter Watson to Michael Redgrave. Had taken a job as ship's cook on a requisitioned yacht used to patrol the Solent.
January: 'Strophes Elégiaques à la mémoire d'Alban Berg' published in *Cahiers du Sud*, no.220.
February: registered for Military Service, expecting to be called up.
Translation of Pierre Jean Jouve's 'The Present Greatness of Mozart' in *Horizon*, Vol.1, no.2.
March 8th: discovered that he was classed as Grade III at his Army Medical and unfit for service. Preoccupied at this time with Kierkegaard for whom he expresses 'astonished veneration'. The *Journals*, like Pascal's *Pensées* and Rimbaud's *Une saison en enfer*, were to be a major influence.
Spring: 'The Writer's Hand' and 2 Jouve translations in *Folios of New Writing*.
Summer: 'Summer Sadness (after Mallarmé)' published in *Babel – A Multilingual Critical Review*, Vol.1, no.3.
Autumn: 'The Gravel-Pit Field' in *Folios of New Writing*.
November 1940: 'Miserere' and 'Amor Fati', published in *Poetry* (London), Vol.1, no.3.
Winter 1940/41: 'Legendary Fragment' published in *Kingdom Come*, Vol.2, no.2 (Oxford).

1941

Lodged with the painter, Lucian Freud: pen and ink drawing of DG by Freud.
January: 'Noctambules' appeared in *Daylight – European Arts and Letters* Vol.1, with a translation from the Czech of Frantisek Halas's 'Marshes of Mazur'.
January-February 1941: 'A Wartime Dawn' published in *Poetry* (London), Vol.1, no.4, and 'Farewell Chorus' in *Partisan Review*, Vol.8, no.1.
March-April: 3 translations, Eluard (1), Jouve (2) appeared in *Poetry* (London), no.5.
June: 'The Gravel-Pit Field' in *Folios of New Writing* (autumn 1941).
July 14th 1941: Jung's *The Integration of the Personality* had helped him to view clearly as a whole his inner development, and the philosopher's explanation of 'the true inner and spiritual significance of the medieval tradition of Alchemy' gave him renewed confidence in his vocation as a poet. His outline for a new novel, 'Benighted in Babylon', whose underlying theme is 'the Quest for the Self', comes to nothing.
August 25th: back home after acting for 3 weeks in rep. In Welwyn Garden City, he played opposite Joan Greenwood in an Ivor Novello comedy.
September 13th: dress rehearsal for *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in which he played Ford. His cherished ambition was to put on a production of Beddoes's *Death's Jest Book*.
Autumn: 'The Open Tomb' in *Selected Writing*, edited by Reginald Moore.
October: in Glasgow with David Archer. Met the painters Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde, and Jankel Adler. Charcoal drawing of DG by Adler (reproduced on front wrapper of ***Collected Poems 1988***).
Later that month he was offered a job with ENSA at £6 per week. He toured as 'David Emery' in Coventry Repertory Theatre's production of *It's a Wise Child* in Darlington, Aylesbury and Colchester.
November/December: 'Woman and Earth', translation of poem by Jouve, in *Kingdom Come*, Vol.3, no.9 (Oxford).
1941 (?): 2 poems in *Today's New Poets* (Resurgam Books).

1942

January 4th: visited Graham and Kathy Sutherland at the White House, Trottiscliffe. He was aware of his tendency to indulge unpredictable whims and of his Methadrine dependency.

Having tried out the Benzedrine inhaler for his catarrh before the war, DG had taken the drug which counteracted his 'seriously depressed normal mental state of lassitude and above all dispiritedness', and treated his raging toothache by removing the rolls of wadding saturated in amphetamine and menthol. He had become 'an inveterate user' of the stimulant. Then he regularly abused Methadrine, easily bought from any chemist, and experienced the ride 'on the relentless switchback from high to low to high' of the drug addict. The results of this systematic abuse were close to disastrous both in the short and the long term, as far as the poet's later physical and mental health were concerned. Planning 'The Journey to Byzantium', formerly 'The City of Night'. His mania for book collecting continued as he toured in King's Lynn, Norwich, Tunbridge Wells and Canterbury.

March: 8 poems in *Poets of Tomorrow – Third Selection* (Hogarth Press).

April 30th: the hoped-for 'sustained creative writing' had not been achieved.

May 8th: back in Teddington and invigorated by a sudden return of serenity and confidence.

July: 4 poems in *An Anthology of Religious Verse*, edited by Norman Nicholson (Penguin).

5 poems in *Poems of this War by younger poets*, edited by Ledward and Strong (Cambridge University Press).

'Miserere I-VIII' and 'A Wartime Dawn' in *Poetry in Wartime*, edited by Tambimuttu (Faber and Faber).

5 translations of Jouve in *New Directions*, 7 (USA).

October-November: appeared in 'Murder From Memory' by Ronald Miller at the Ambassador Theatre in London's West End. At this time, he suffered an internal haemorrhage from a ruptured stomach ulcer exacerbated by the 'amphetamized and mentholated fluid I had been consuming regularly for months on end', leading to an enforced stay for several weeks in Middlesex Hospital near Kew. Afterwards, unable for some time to break his Methadrine habit, he began to hear the constant murmuring of inner voices and became increasingly addicted during the post-war period.

1942-1943. During this period, DG visited George Barker and Elizabeth Smart in the basement of A.P. Herbert's empty house, and stayed at Michael Hamburger's mother's house.

At some stage during the war, DG lived with George Barker off Vauxhall Bridge Road in Bessborough Street, London.

He also worked at the BBC in some radio productions for Louis MacNeice.

1943

Drawing of DG by Lucian Freud.

Collections by Delmore Schwartz, James Agee, Randall Jarrell, Muriel Rukeyser, Robert Penn Warren and Karl Shapiro, together with Eliot's 'Dry Salvages' in *Partisan Review* and the first English translation of Lorca's *Poet in New York*, sent by Miss Steloff at the Gotham Book Mart in New York.

December: Tambimuttu's Poetry London Editions published ***Poems 1937-42***, with illustrations and dustjacket by Sutherland (Nicholson & Watson).

July: poem in *New Road 3* (eds.) Comfort and Bayliss.

Michael Hamburger concerned about DG's mental and physical health. Kathleen Raine, too, horrified by the change in him: 'He looked racked, tormented'.
August: 'Legendary Fragment' included in *Wartime Harvest*, edited by Henry Treece & Stefan Schimanski (John Bale & Staples Ltd.).

1944
July: 2nd impression of ***Poems 1937-42.***
Winter: 2 translations from the French of Jules Supervielle in *Selected Writing.*

1945
When the war ended, DG learned of Von Müllen's death, arrested and hanged by the Gestapo during the Nazi occupation of Denmark. He discovered, too, that Fondane had been gassed at Birkenau **(October 1944)** after his betrayal to the Gestapo in Paris. Strongly affected by the news of both deaths.
3 poems included in the anthology *Poems of our Time 1900-1942*, edited by Richard Church & Mildred Bozman (J.M. Dent).
Public reading with Edith Sitwell and Hugh MacDiarmid.
June: 3 translations in *Transformation 4*, edited by Stefan Schimanski & Henry Treece (Lindsey Drummond Ltd.).

1946
'Introducing Kenneth Patchen' in *Poetry Quarterly*, I.
March-April: 'Elsewhere' published in *Adam*, no.156/7
April: 'A Little Anthology of Existentialist Thought', and translations of Jouve and Eluard in *New Road 4.*
June-July: 'Concert of Angels' in *Adam*, no.159/60.
Summer: 'Note on Symbolism: its role in Metaphysical Thought' in *Poetry Quarterly*, Vol.8, no.2.
August: 'Introduction' to *Kenneth Patchen: Outlaw of the Lowest Planet* (Grey Walls Press).
December 10th: wrote letter from Downside Crescent, Belsize Park, London to Terence Tiller to thank him for the appreciation of his poems broadcast the previous night: 'You said very exactly several of the things I've most wanted to express'.

1947-1948. Lived in France.

1947
Spring: Jouve came to London and Oxford to lecture: '*L'Apologie du poète*'.
DG returned to Paris later in the year. Denounced publicly by Breton in the Café de la place Blanche and summarily expelled from the Surrealist Group for being 'not only a Communist but a Catholic'. Breton was unhappy, too, with the line 'Christ of Revolution and of Poetry' in the poem 'Ecce Homo'. DG continued meeting Man Ray after he stopped seeing the other Surrealists he knew: 'He was one of the most warm, friendly, unjudgmental and undogmatic people I've met'.
At the International Surrealist Exhibition in Paris, representatives of the British Group denounced Henry Moore, Jennings, Read and DG in their *Déclaration.*
Remained there for about a year, making important contacts through the kindness of Mme. Roland de Margerie. Often visited Jouve who now lived in a studio near the Porte d'Orléans in the rue Antoine Chantin, where he met Yves de Bayser.
Met Jules Supervielle after the war: DG acknowledged the significance for him of

Supervielle and his work, 'but he was not an influence on my poetry'.
June: translations of 2 Jouve poems in *A Mirror for French Poetry 1840-1940*, selected & edited by Cecily Mackworth (London: Routledge).
September: DG and Hamburger met unexpectedly in the park at Versailles.
September-October: translations of 2 poems by Jouve in *Poetry(London)*.

1948
3rd impression (i.e. second edition re-set) of ***Poems 1937-42.***
Contributed 'Clef des mots: Mot-clef' to *84*, nos.3-4 (Paris).
June-July: 'New French Poetry – A Paris Letter' in *Poetry* (London), Vol.4, no.13.
August: 'A Vagrant' published in *Horizon*, Vol.XVIII, no.104.
November-December: 'The Sacred Hearth' in *Poetry* (London), Vol.4., no.14.

1949
Rockefeller-Atlantic award.
'Eros Absconditus', 'Rondel for the Fourth Decade', 'Rex Mundi' in *12th Street*, III, 1 (New York).
'Winter Garden' in the anthology, *Poetry of the Present* (ed.) Geoffrey Grigson (Phoenix House, London).
9 poems included in the anthology, *The New British Poets*, edited by Kenneth Rexroth (New Directions, USA).
Publication of *Anthologie de la Poésie Anglaise Contemporaine*, edited by Georges Albert Astre (L'Arche, Paris), including 5 poems by DG in French translation.
April: 'Demos in Oxford Street' in *Horizon*, Vol.XIX, no.112.
May: 'A Rondel for the Fourth Decade' and 'September Sun 1947' in *Poetry* (London), Vol.4, no.15.
August: 'Elsewhere' in *Little Reviews Anthology*, edited by Denys Val Baker (Methuen & Co. Ltd.).
October: essay, 'Léon Chestov: After Ten Years' Silence' in *Horizon*, Vol.XX, no.118.
6 poems in *Botteghe Oscure*, no.IV.

1950
Attended the Venice Biennale.
Saw Humphrey Jennings not long before his death (on the Greek island of Poros).
Poem, 'Qu'est-ce que la Décadence?' in *84*, no.13 (Paris), with DG's translations into French of 3 poems by Kathleen Raine: 'Feu d'Hiver', 'Le Monde', and L'Esprit Tutelaire'.
March: *Hole in the Fourth Wall or Talk, Talk Talk*, his only play, performed at the Watergate Theatre in London. Ran for c.3 weeks.
'The Post-War Night' in *World Review*, ns.13, p.5.
May/June: 6 poems in *Points* 6 (Paris).
Summer: spent 2 months in Venice in the summer, thanks to a generous travelling grant from the writer 'Bryher'. Invited by Peggy Guggenheim to be her guest for a week near the end of his stay. He accompanied her to the Sutherlands' apartment on the opposite side of the canal. Met David Wright.
October 6th: 'A Tough Generation' in *Times Literary Supplement*, No.2540.
November: ***A Vagrant and other poems*** published (London: John Lehmann Ltd.).
'Innocence and Experience' in *New Statesman and Nation*, Vol.40, no.1027.
2 poems in *Botteghe Oscure* VI.
December/January: 'On the Grand Canal' and 'Sizzling Seclusion: Rumba' in *Points*,

no.8 (Paris).

1951

Elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Poetry Reading tour of the United States with W.S. Graham and Kathleen Raine. Met Auden again: he introduced the first poetry reading in New York, at the 93rd St. YMCA. and they had dinner with Edmund Wilson: 'fascinating conversation', but DG and Auden argued about music – 'he was very dictatorial'.

DG had a room in an English woman friend's timber house in Maddagh Street under Brooklyn Heights. The British poets went on to read on their own, on different occasions, 'at various universities, one on the banks of the Hudson.' DG chose not to accompany Kathleen Raine on visit to meet Ezra Pound, a decision he later regretted. Met Marianne Moore, and Joseph Cornell: 'very shy'. Remembers seeing Dylan & Caitlin Thomas 'tumbling backwards down the outside steps of a brownstone into the snow below. Caitlin had made it plain that she was sick of Dylan being the focus of all attention and was determined to do something about it'.

Awarded a Guggenheim fellowship.

Last meeting with Dylan Thomas in the White Horse tavern in Greenwich Village, New York.

Summer: Spent time with Carson McCullers, in London for 10 weeks.

November 27th: made a recording for the Library of Congress in Washington, USA of 6 translations from the French of Jouve.

December 25th: had dinner with Auden at the YMCA near Harlem; 'Auden lived in a loft then in the garment district'. Saw him 3 or 4 times while in America.

1952

Had already met John Cage. Nicholas Calas took DG to Rutherford to meet William Carlos Williams.

DG spent 2-3 months at Yaddo Colony; Auden had written him a letter of recommendation as he had no money: 'I spent all my money on LPs at a half-price record shop in New York'. Found Kenneth Fearing the 'most sympathetic' of the writers there. Then he stayed with Jeanne Reynal and lived in the same house as Max Ernst and Dorothea Tanning. 'Ernst was rather reserved, and even secretive, but had a sense of humour'. Went to Patchin Place in New York to look up E.E. Cummings.

February: ***Thomas Carlyle*** published for the British Council and National Book League (Longmans, Green & Co. in the series 'Writers and their Work'. (2nd edition 1963; 3rd 1969).

Late **Summer:** left New York and set off to visit his parents in retirement on Vancouver Island, BC. via Chicago and the offices of *Poetry*, and Seattle where he met Theodore Roethke.

Returned to England where he would learn almost immediately of the death of Paul Eluard.

1953

Douglas Cleverdon commissioned a radio drama with working title 'Night and the Watchman'. Struggling with writer's 'block' but completed it relatively quickly.

Turned up unexpectedly at Michael Hamburger's flat in London – his first visit in 8 years.

January: met Samuel Beckett in Georges Duthuit's studio during the week of the first performance of *Waiting for Godot.*

May 4th: transmission on BBC Third Programme of 'Personal Anthology: Chosen and

Introduced by David Gascoyne'. The poems are by Langland, Herbert, Vaughan, Blake, D.G. Rossetti, William Morris, Yeats, D.H. Lawrence, Edwin Muir, Kathleen Raine.

1954-64: went to live in France – in Paris in the winter and in the Tour de César in Aix-en-Provence in the summer, publishing little. House guest of the artist Meraud Guevara (widow of the painter 'Chile' Guevara). Occasional brief visits to England. Suffering from writer's 'block' throughout this period. 'I had nowhere to live and hardly any money, so I stayed on and on'. During the fifties, DG visited Joan Miró, and later met the 'Beat' poets, Allen Ginsberg & Orlovsky, together with William Burroughs, in Paris, 'who were staying near the place St. Michel'.

1954

'Elegiac Improvisation on the Death of Paul Eluard' in *Botteghe Oscure*, No.XIII (Italy).
February: translations from the French of Reverdy, Supervielle and Emmanuel in *The Window*, No.7.
April 2nd: 'Sentimental Colloquy' in *Times Literary Supplement*, No.2722.
Spring: 'Metropolis by Night' and 'Night-Watcher's Ruminations' (two early versions of passages in ***Night Thoughts***) in *Points*, No.19 (Paris).

1955

John Heath-Stubbs suggested DG to succeed him as Gregory Fellow of Poetry at Leeds University, but no one knew DG's address, and Thomas Blackburn was given the post.
February: 'A New Poem by Pierre Jean Jouve – "Language"' in *London Magazine*, Vol.2, no.2.
August 19th: BBC Third Programme broadcast, *The Man with the Blue Guitar* by Wallace Stevens, read by DG, music by Humphrey Searle, in a Douglas Cleverdon Production (repeated **September 1st**).
December 7th: first broadcast of ***Night Thoughts: A Radiophonic Poem***, on the BBC Third Programme, with music composed and conducted by Humphrey Searle.

1956

DG in Àix-en Provence. Attended a performance of *Don Giovanni* at the Opera House with George Barker.
January 10th: letter to DG from Douglas Cleverdon to confirm that the BBC Third Programme had agreed to take 'Celebrations for a Festival' which he had commissioned from the poet, with music to be composed by Humphrey Searle.
April 15th: first publication of the poem 'Requiem', set to music by Priaulx Rainier, in the programme for the first performance in the Music Gallery concerts at the Victoria & Albert Museum.. Soloist Peter Pears: 'I wasn't very keen on Pears's voice'. DG attended the first performance, and was introduced to Benjamin Britten.
Spring: 'Night Thoughts' (an early version of the final section of ***Night Thoughts***) in *Botteghe Oscure* XVII.
October 1st: letter from Maddison & Lambs, addressed to DG at Kleecot, Milford Road, Elstead, Surrey informing him that his Westminster Bank account had been credited with a cheque for £2000, in respect of his legacy from V.W. 'Peter' Watson.
Another letter from Cleverdon regarding 'Celebrations', not wishing 'to pester [DG] unduly'.
November: ***Night Thoughts: A Radiophonic Poem*** published (André Deutsch Ltd.), with dustjacket by Julian Trevelyan.

1958
March: first American editions of ***Night Thoughts*** – ordinary issue and limited issue (Grove Press, New York).

1959
November: 'Remembering the Dead' in *X*, Vol.1, no.1 (eds.) David Wright and Patrick Swift.

1961
Thirty paintings by DG exhibited at the home of the Countess of Moray in Ebury Street, London.

1964
6 poems included in the anthology *Poetry of the Thirties* (ed.) Robin Skelton (Penguin).
Tried to get into the Elysée Palace, felt he had a mission to see de Gaulle, and was forcibly taken to the *gendarmerie* and kept there for a whole afternoon. De Gaulle telephoned Pierre Jean Jouve. DG was taken to hospital in a straitjacket: culmination of 'period of sterility and lost self-confidence'. Told he must go back to England but on no account live alone. He returned, to live with his parents on the Isle of Wight at 48 Oxford Street, Northwood, Cowes.
In the next 11 years there were to be various periods of hospitalization, following what DG called 'three nervous breakdowns and subsequent incarcerations'.

1965
5 poems included in the anthology *The Mid-Century: English Poetry 1940-1960*, edited by David Wright (Penguin).
June: ***Collected Poems***, edited by Robin Skelton (Oxford University Press in association with André Deutsch). DG felt that at last he had something to show his parents. 'Then my father died and I had acute depression. I went off my head in London'.
November 25th: BBC Third Programme broadcast, *British Art in the Thirties*, with a recorded contribution by DG. Produced by Cleverdon (repeated **December 2nd**).
DG was living as house guest of Kathleen Raine in London.

1967
His father died, prompting the onset of a 'long bout of acute clinical depression'.
10 poems included in the anthology *Poetry of the 1930s*, edited by Allan Rodway (Longmans).
Spring: met Lawrence Durrell by chance at the house of Xan and Daphne Fielding.

1968
Alan Clodd, bookseller and publisher (Enitharmon Press) met DG for the first time. An enduring friendship was established, lasting 33 years. Clodd put DG in touch with Edward Upward: both lived on the Isle of Wight but had never met during the 1930s, or since. A firm friendship developed.
3 poems included in the anthology *Poetry of the Forties*, edited by Robin Skelton (Penguin).
March 20th: BBC Third Programme broadcast, *A Link Between Two Worlds – A study of André Breton*, with recorded contribution by DG in a Cleverdon production.
September 29th: BBC Third Programme broadcast, *David Gascoyne as Translator*, compiled and presented by Robin Skelton, produced by Cleverdon.

1969

March 27th: gave an address, 'Martin Heidegger: Ontology (Being) and the Human Crisis' at the Centre for Spiritual & Psychological Studies in the Ulster Room, Park Place, St. James' Street, London.

May: went to Amsterdam with Elizabeth Sprigge, shortly before another breakdown.

July: patient in Horton Hospital, Epsom.

October: wrote 'Three Verbal Sonatinas' dedicated to Humphrey Searle.

November 18th: discharged from Horton. ***Self-Discharged***, his account of this experience of living in a mental hospital, was published in **1986.**

Winter: 'The Sun at Midnight' in *Two Rivers*.

1970

'Three Verbal Sonatinas' in *Adam International Review*, No.337/339, 'Writers and Music number'. Included reproductions of 2 paintings by DG, 'Paludes'.

September: publication of ***Penguin Modern Poets 17: David Gascoyne, W.S. Graham, Kathleen Raine***, (Penguin Books). 31 poems in the selection.

October: ***Collected Verse Translations***, edited by Robin Skelton (Oxford University Press).

November: ***The Sun at Midnight***. *Notes on the Story of Civilization Seen as the History of the Great Experimental Work of the Supreme Scientist* – ordinary and limited issues (Enitharmon Press). The text, a series of aphorisms and two poems, was written after he had come out of Horton Hospital on the outskirts of Epsom after another breakdown. He had tried to get into Buckingham Palace one morning at 8.30. 'A guard wouldn't let me in so I slapped his face. I was seized and interrogated but they were surprisingly polite to me. All the time there was a second self which retained complete lucidity, recording it all'.

1971

DG's mother died.

1974

Met Judy Tyler Lewis. She had been a visitor and he a patient in Whitecroft, the island's psychiatric hospital, undergoing treatment; she read a selection of poems from the *Oxford Book of Verse* to a dozen 'severely depressed people', and chose 'September Sun'. He touched her arm: 'I'm David Gascoyne, I wrote that'. Their relationship developed from that meeting. She brought him home from Whitecroft every weekend for almost 6 months.

They spent a week in London; he had just been sent a cheque for £100 by the Royal Literary Society. Alan Clodd took them both to an exhibition of the thirties poets at the British Library. It was the turning point of their relationship.

1975

May 17th: married Judy Lewis. Author and critic, Neville Braybrooke, was best man at the wedding.

DG literally seemed to gain a new lease of life following a loss of confidence and self-esteem. He began to write and travel again, often abroad, to poetry readings and festivals, (sometimes 12 times a year), tapping a rich new vein of creativity, contributing reviews, memoirs and translations, occasionally poems, to newspapers and periodicals. 'Several of the small number of poems produced since my final recovery from a third breakdown and my marriage in 1975 were written as a result of requests from editors'.

Revisited Paris: 'His reception was so overwhelming that it really touched him' (Judy G).
Took part in the Cambridge Poetry Festival.

1976
The first 6 poems of *Miserere* set to music by Bernard Naylor.
Publication of 4 poems in German translation in *Moderne Englische Lyrik*, edited by Willi Erzgäber & Ute Knoedgen (Stuttgart).
January: BBC 2 TV transmission, *Poetry in Public* in Open University series, included a 4 minute reading by DG, recorded at the Cambridge Poetry Festival 1975.
July: ***Three Poems*** – numbered and lettered issues (Tragara Press, Edinburgh): 'Half-an-Hour'; 'Remembering the Dead'; 'On Re-reading Jacob Boehme's "Aurora"'.
October 28th: gave a poetry reading in The Cellar at Words Etcetera, 89 Theberton Street, London.

1977
Poetry reading at North West Arts.

1978
August: publication of ***Paris Journal 1937-1939***, with a preface by Lawrence Durrell and dustjacket by Julian Trevelyan – ordinary issue and limited edition (Enitharmon Press).
October 11th: BBC Radio Three broadcast, *David Gascoyne in Retrospect*, presented by Cleverdon with readings by DG and an excerpt from the stereo version of ***Night Thoughts***.
November 26th: gave reading with Stephen Spender in The Round House Downstairs, London.

1979
Attended poetry festival at Oxford.
Declared himself to be completely recovered from manic depression, schizophrenia and paranoia. This was due in very large measure to the vital – and revitalizing – influence of his wife, Judy, since their marriage.
Invited by Christine Jordis to read at the British Council in Paris.
'A Positive Menace' in *Poetry Nation* 12 (Manchester), included 'A Note on Benjamin Fondane', and translations from Fondane's *Rimbaud le Voyou*, 'Poem 1933' and 'Non-Lieu' with notes.
2 translations from René Char and Stefan Augustin Doinas in *Adam International Review*, No. 419/420.
May: gave poetry reading with Laurence Lerner at the old Poetry Society headquarters in London.
June: attended the Third Cambridge International Poetry Festival: 'Edmond Jabès made a profound impression' on him. Met also Donald Davie, Jon Silkin, C.H. Sisson and Michael Schmidt. Ginsberg and Orlovsky present. Then participated in the Primo Festival Internazionale dei Poeti in Ostia (transferred from Rome). Ginsberg, Orlovsky, Corso, Burroughs taking part, with Lawrence Ferlinghetti whom DG met for the first time. Read with George Barker.
July: 'Retrospective Notes on "The Other Larry"' in *Labrys* 5, special Lawrence Durrell issue. Included is the poem 'The Other Larry'.
September 29th: gave poetry reading in the Purcell Room at the Royal Festival Hall, with Barker, W.S. Graham, Harold Pinter, John Wain, John Heath-Stubbs and Louis Simpson.

October 4th: poem, 'Speechlessness' (written August-September) on the murder of Lord Mountbatten, in *The Listener*.
Poetry reading at Sunderland Arts Centre.

1980
Visited USA, gave readings in San Francisco, met Allen Ginsberg again, and Lawrence Ferlingetti.
'My Indebtedness to Jouve' and translations of 4 poems by Jouve relating to Mozart in *Adam International Review*, No.422/24.
'David Wright: A Few Words of Reminiscence and Appreciation' in *Poetry Nation Review* 14, Vol.6, no.6.
2 translations from the French of Raymond Queneau in *Pennine Platform*, No.1.
'F.T. Prince: A Belated Tribute', review of *Collected Poems*, and 'Homage to Life', a translation of a poem by Supervielle, in *Pennine Platform*, No.2.
3 translations from the French of Jean Follain in *Stand*, Vol. 21, no.2.
'Meetings with Léon Chestov', translated from the essay by Benjamin Fondane, in *Poetry Nation Review* 19, Vol.7, no.5.
'Renard's Gift', essay on Jules Renard's poetry, in *Poetry Review*, 70, 1-2.
Spring: 'Memory' and 'Marseilles' from the French of Eugène Guillevic and Jules Supervielle in *Argo*
April: ***Early Poems*** published (Greville Press, Warwick): 'The Netsukés of Hottara Sonja'; 'Slate'; 'The cold renunciatory beauty'; 'Light of the Sun over Arctic Regions'; 'Morning Dissertation'; 'The Unattained'; 'The Light of the Lion's Mane'; 'The Symptomatic World'.
July/August: 'Antonia White: A Personal Appreciation' in *Literary Review*, No.21.
August: contributed introductory essay (in French) to ***Benjamin Fondane – Lenal des fantômes*** (Editions Plasma, Paris). Translated into English by Roger Scott with Catherine McFarlane, and first published in ***Selected Prose 1934-1996*** (ed.) Roger Scott in 1998.
Summer: 'The Unsilvered Glass' (part one of DG's translation of *The Magnetic Fields*) published in *Megaphone*, No.1.
October 3rd: 'Sweeping the World's Surface', review of Denis Roche's *Dépôts de Savoir et de Technique* in *Times Literary Supplement*
October: ***Journal 1936-1937*** with jacket design by Julian Trevelyan – ordinary issue and limited edition (Enitharmon Press). Includes the short story *Death of an Explorer* and the essay, 'Léon Chestov'.
The near explosion of awed and enthusiastic reviews by critics after the publication of ***Paris Journal 1937-1939*** and the earlier ***Journal 1936-1937*** (following the mysterious re-appearance of the notebooks in the post), suggested that they had assumed he was dead because of his long literary silence.
November 14th: 'Peculiarly Objective', review of *Voyons Voir* by Pierre Berhan and Man Ray 'The Photographic Image', in *Times Literary Supplement*.
October/December: 'Prelude to a new fin-de siècle' in *Nuova Rivista Europea*, No.19/20.
December 5th: 'Misguided Tour', review of Jouhandeau's *Journal sous l'Occupation* in *Times Literary Supplement*.

1981
Attended the Cambridge Poetry Festival. Photographed with Tambimuttu.
'A Kind of Declaration' and a review of *Selected Poems* by Angelos Sikelianos, published in *Temenos*, I.

January 23rd: 'The art of embroidery', review of Louis Aragon, *Aragon: le mentir-vrai* in *Times Literary Supplement*.
March: read at the City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco. Saw Lawrence Ferlinghetti again. Shared platform with Allen Ginsberg at the New York University Loeb Student Centre.
March 13th: gave a poetry reading at the Bernard Jacobson Gallery with Tom Pickard.
April 5th: Production of *Night Thoughts: An Experiment in Dance Theatre*, at the Palace Theatre, 17 Duke's Road, London. Choreography by Vivien Bridson, music by Humphrey Searle.
May 7th: DG was guest poet, and Judy read her choice of poems in the interlude, in the series 'British Poetry Today' presented by Eileen Warren, 'Inside the Orangery', Holland Park, London.
May 18th: took part in 'Homage to David Gascoyne' at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris.
June 28th: *Poet's Choice – Kettle's Yard, Cambridge*, an exhibition. 5 typewritten A4 sheets: DG, Kathleen Raine, Elizabeth Smart, John James, contributed notes on their choice of paintings.
July 9th: read with Jeremy Reed at the National Poetry Centre, Earl's Court Square.
Summer: publication of *Encrages*, numéro 6 (Université de Paris VIII – Vincennes), which includes DG's essay, 'Le Surréalisme et la Jeune Poésie Anglaise: souvenirs de l'avant guerre'.
Attended the third European Poetry Festival at Louvain in Belgium. Contributed essay 'The Poet and the City', and poems 'Prelude to a new fin-de-siècle', 'I.M. Benjamin Fondane', 'Strophes Elégiaques: à la mémoire d'Alban Berg', to *Poësie in De Stad - Poetry in the Town* (Cahier 30, Leuvense, Schrijversakatie).
Autumn: 'Opium' and 'There was a leaf' from the French of Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes and Robert Desnos in *Argo*.
October 10th: celebrated his birthday with George Barker at the Arts Centre in Colchester.
October 16th: 'The Pains of Expulsion', review of *Sous de Vastes Portiques* by J.J. Mayoux, in *Times Literary Supplement*.
October: 'The Walk', a version of Hölderlin by DG in *For David Gascoyne on his 65th Birthday*, edited by Tony Rudolf (Enitharmon Press). Presented to DG at the Essex Contemporary Arts Festival in Colchester.
November: brief introduction to catalogue: *Cecil Max Michaelis Peintures*, 12 Novembre – 19 Décembre (Galerie Henriette Gomés, 6 rue du Cirque, Paris).
December 23rd: began his autobiography, 'Eyes in the Back of my Head, Vol.1: "Born 1916"'; only a few pages written.

1982

Antennae and 2nd edition of ***A Short Survey of Surrealism***, with a new introduction by DG (San Francisco: City Lights Books).
'Hastily Assembled Homage to Denis Roche' in *New Departures*, No.14.
'Prelude to a new fin-de-siècle' and translations of a selection of poems from *Inscrire* by Yves de Bayser in *Temenos*, 2 (London).
4 translations of poems from the French of O.V. de L. Milosz in *Temenos*, 3 (London).
'Seasons' (part 2 of *The Magnetic Fields* translation) in *Pearl* (Denmark).
'In 80 Days' (part 4 of *The Magnetic Fields* translation) in *Kudos* II.
March: publication of ***David Gascoyne - La Mano del Poeta***, a selection of poems translated into Italian (Edizioni S. Marco del Giustiniani, Genova, Italy) led to the award

of the 'Premio Biella – Poesia europea 1982'. DG visited Italy for the presentation.
May: translations of O.V. De L. Milosz, Reverdy, Jouve, Supervielle, Breton, Eluard, Péret in *The Random House Book of Twentieth Century French Poetry*, edited by Paul Auster (New York: Random House).
June 7th: returned from a 5-day visit to Paris.
June 8th: responded to questionnaire, on the Falklands issue, *Authors Take Sides on the Falklands War* (eds.) Cecil Woolf and Jean Moorcroft Wilson (Cecil Woolf Publishers, London) published later that year. Included 'Statement' and 'A Rare Occasional Poem'.
Autumn: French translations of 4 poems by DG in *Two Fold Obsidiane*, no.4.
September: contributed translation from Gilbert Lascault's 'Là bas' to *Free Spirits* 1 (City Lights Books, San Francisco).
'Variations on a Phrase' in *Poetry Review*, Vol.72, no.3.
October 1st: 'Good Places and Bad', review of Julien Green's *La Terre est si belle...1976-1978* in *Times Literary Supplement*,
October: translation into French by Christine Jordis of extracts from ***Paris Journal 1937-1939*** in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, no.357.
'Eclipses' (part three of *The Magnetic Fields* translation) in *Kyak*, No.60 (Santa Cruz, California).
November: introduction (French/English) to catalogue: *Roland Penrose – Collages Récents* 12 Novembre – 30 *Décembre* (Galerie Henriette Gomés, 6 rue du Cirque, Paris).

1983
DG's translation of Bernard Groethuysen's preface to *Poèmes de la folie de Hölderlin* by Jouve and Pierre Klossowski, published in *Spectrum* 3.
'George Barker at Seventy' in *Poetry Nation Review* 31, Vol.9, no.5.
'Tambimuttu' in *Poetry Nation Review* 34, Vol.10, no.2.
'Barriers' (part 5 of *The Magnetic Fields*) in *Spectrum*, No.3.
'Let's Move No More' (part 6 of *The Magnetic Fields*) in *Ambit*, No.95.
2 poems in French translation in *Detours d'Ecriture* 5-6 (Aix-en-Provence).
Attended Poetry Festival in Amsterdam. Visited Paris.
'Departures' published in *New Departures*, 15, edited by Michael Horowitz.
Publication in Italian translation of 2 poems in *Lo Spazio Umano*, no.6 (Milan).
Issue of cassette tape, *David Gascoyne & Anne Ridler read and discuss selections of their own poems* in the 'Critical Forum' series (Norwich Tapes).
Selection of translations from the French of Loys Masson in *Modern Poetry in Translation 1983*, edited by Daniel Weissbort (Carcanet Press, London/Manchester).
January: preface (translated into Italian by Roberto Sanesi) to *T.S. Eliot – Poesie* (Gennaio, Italy: Tascabili Bompiani).
February 6th: talked with Roland Penrose about Humphrey Jennings and read a selection of his poems at the Riverside Studio, Crisp Road, Hammersmith. Followed by a screening of 6 of Jennings's documentary films introduced by Lindsay Anderson.
March: 1 translation from the French of Valéry Larbaud in *Pennine Platform*, new series 3.
April: 'The Masks of the Coloured Heat' (from *The Magnetic Fields* translation) in *Kyak*, No.61 (Santa Cruz, California).
August 28th: Two Counties Radio Bournemouth broadcast, *Greetings to the Solitary*, DG interviewed by Sean Street.
October: translation into French by Christine Jordis of extract from ***Paris Journal 1937-1939*** in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, no.369.
November 10th: Introductory Talk for Reading at the Royal Academy of Arts, Burlington

House, Piccadilly: an A4 typescript of 8 pages.
Publication of *An Imitation of Leopardi's Imitation Canti XXXV* (Charles Seluzicki, Fine Books, Portland, Oregon, USA).
December 9th: 'Distorting Mirrors', review of *Van Gogh ou l'enterrement dans les blés* by Vivianne Forrester in *Times Literary Supplement.*
December 14th: 'Between Lack and Excess', review of *Oeuvres Complètes* by René Char in *Times Literary Supplement.*

1984
Gave numerous readings nation-wide.
He and wife met Lawrence Durrell in Paris and spent an evening at the Rotunde.
Michel Rémy's monograph, *David Gascoyne ou l'urgence de l'inexprimé*, included 'Procession to the Private Sector', an unpublished Surrealist film scenario from the mid-thirties.
Publication of *Cahiers sur la poésie*, no.2, numéro special David Gascoyne, edited by Michèle Duclos (Université de Bordeaux III). Includes interview, extracts (in English) from ***Opening Day*** and ***The Sun at Midnight***, the essay 'The Poet and the City' and DG's statement of the poet's mission (in English).
January: publication of ***Journal de Paris et d'Ailleurs 1936-1942***, translated by Christine Jordis (Paris: Flammarion). The *Wartime Journal 1940-1942* appeared for the first time in print, here in French.
January/February: 'The Hooded Carriage Halted in the Night', translation of poem by O.V. de L. Milosz in *Southern Arts Bulletin*, No.24.
February/April: 'But Who's Afraid?', translated from the French of André Frenaud, in *The Third Eye (Psychic Issue).*
May: ***Five Early Uncollected Poems*** (The Other Branch Readings, Leamington Spa): 'In Perpetuum Mobile'; 'Reintegration'; 'Landscape'; 'A Sudden Squall'; 'The Hero'.
'White Gloves' (part 7 of *The Magnetic Fields*), and 'The Poet's Last Words' from the French of René Daumal, in *Atlas Anthology* II.
Introductory essay to catalogue: *Roland Penrose – Recent Collages*, for The Gardner Centre Gallery, University of Sussex, Touring Exhibition.
June: poem, 'Variations on a Phrase' published as a broadside by Charles Seluzicki (Fine Books, Portland, Oregon USA), with a lithographic design by S.W. Hayter.
June 13th: contributed to a recorded discussion, 'Memories of Cyril Connolly', at the PEN Club
October 15th: ***Rencontres avec Benjamin Fondane, Edition Arcane 17***, included three letters from DG and summary of reply from Fondane, commentary, and poem, 'In Memoriam Benjamin Fondane'.
November/December: 2 English texts and 6 poems in French translation in *Poésie '84*, no.5 (Paris).

1985
Attended poetry festival in Iceland, and the 8th Congress of the 'Organisation Mondiale des Poètes' in Corfu.
'Gascoyne reviews Ferlinghetti': *Seven Days in Nicaragua Libre* in *Ambit*, No.102.
Translations of 8 poems in *The Noble Traveller: the life and writings of O.V. de L. Milosz.*
February: DG's translation, *André Breton & Philippe Soupault – The Magnetic Fields*, (London: Atlas Press), limited and signed editions.
March: contributed a memoir, 'Man of Principle' to *Grigson at Eighty*, edited with an

introduction by R.M. Healey (Cambridge: Rampant Lions Press).
July: introduction, 'The Poetry of Salah Faiq' to *Salah Faiq – The Lode, The Word, Poems and Collages* (London: Melmoth).
September: poem, 'Future Reference', and translations from the French of Breton, Bernard Delvaille and Jacques Rigaut in *Atlas Anthology* III.
November 21st: Radio Three broadcast (Bristol Studios): *Self-Discharged – A Monologue*, by DG, read by John Franklin-Roberts.
November 23rd: 'A Poet's Way of Bringing Order out of Chaos', review of *Pandaemonium 1660-1886* by Humphrey Jennings (eds.) Mary Lou Jennings and Charles Madge, in *The Tablet.*
DG's translation, *Giacomo Leopardi: A Se Stesso–To Himself* (Tragara Press for Enitharmon Press).
November/December: 'Thoughts of Edgar Morin' in *Resurgence*, No.113.

1986
President for one year of PEN World Poetry.
Travelled to Florence, made 2 visits to Belgium.
'Barcelona Diary' from ***Journal 1936-1937*** in *Spanish Front: Writers on the Spanish War*, edited by Valentine Cunningham (Oxford University Press).
1 poem and 1 translation in *Temenos* 7 (London), together with an extract from an interview with Michel Rémy, translated by Kathleen Raine.
Benjamin Péret: Remove Your Hat or A Bunch of Carrots translated by David Gascoyne & Humphrey Jennings, reprinted 50 years after their original publication with a new introduction by DG (London: Atlas Press).
Contributed 'Anniversary Epistle to Allen' to *Best Minds: A Tribute to Allen Ginsberg*, edited by Bill Morgan & Bob Rosenthal (Lospecchio Press, New York), and to Kanrecki, *A Tribute to Allen Ginsberg*, part 2.
March/April: first publication of ***Self-Discharged*** in *Resurgence*, No.115.
August: Simon Callow directed a short play, *Zero Hour*, about DG (played by Adam Godley), scripted by Mark McGlynn, at the Edinburgh Festival in Greyfriars Kirk House.
October: attended the Association of Serbian Writers' annual International Writers' meeting; the theme was 'Literature and the Apocalypse'.

1986/1987. *Meetings with Benjamin Fondane*, translated into English by Robin Waterfield, in *Aquarius 17/18*, a special 'Poetry of the Forties' edition. Includes two letters from DG to Fondane and a memoir. The reply to his first letter is summarised because DG had long ago lost the original, but his copy of Fondane's response was found by Roger Scott in one of the DG notebooks in the British Library in 1992.

1987
Contributed introductory paragraph and 'Mood' to Jon Stallworthy's anthology, *First Lines*.
'Action Urgent and its nature clear', review of *Spanish Front: Writers on the Civil War*, edited by Valentine Cunningham, Christopher Caudwell, *Collected Poems*, John Cornford, *Collected Writings*, in *Poetry Review*, Vol.77, no.3.
July/August: 'The last descendent of Taliesin', review of *The Collected Poems of Vernon Watkins*, in *Resurgence*, No.123.

1988
Publication of ***David Gascoyne – Collected Poems 1988*** (Oxford University Press), with

a long preface, 'Introductory Notes'.
The Unconscious, Spirituality, Catastrophe, translation of essay by Pierre Jean Jouve (Words Press).
Three Translations (Words Press) MIR Poets Number Eighteen; versions of Xie Chuang (421-466 AD), Hölderlin & Leopardi.
May 6th: 'The ascetic sensualist', review of Pierre Jean Jouve, *Oeuvre* Tomes I & II, in the *Times Literary Supplement.*
May 7th: DG's obituary for S.W. Hayter appeared in *The Independent.*
July 14th: DG's obituary for Julian Trevelyan published in *The Independent.*
July 28th-September 4th: during this period, DG gave a lecture, 'Francis Picabia: Funny-guy' at the Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh, to accompany the exhibition, *Francis Picabia (1874-1953).* The text was published for the first time in ***Selected Prose 1934-1996***, edited by Roger Scott (1998).
October 7th-13th: 'Revolution inside and out', review of *Archives du Surréalisme* 2 vols., in *Times Literary Supplement.*

1989
Last weekend visit by DG to the Durrells at Sommières.
Publication of *Novalis – Hymns to the Night*, translated by Jeremy Reed, with an introductory essay, 'Novalis and the Night' by DG (Enitharmon Press).
Contributed 'On the Terrace', 'Hommage à Mallarmé' and a section from ***Opening Day*** to Neville Braybrooke's anthology, *Seeds in the Wind.*
'On the State of Poetry', response to a questionnaire, in *Agenda*, No.3 (special issue).
'PL Editions and Graham Sutherland' in *Tambimuttu: Bridge Between Two Worlds*, edited by Jane Williams (Peter Owen).
Completed long *Afterword* for ***Collected Journals 1936-42*** which would be published two years later.
January 24th: DG's obituary for Salvador Dalí appeared in *The Independent.*
April 14th-20th: 'A mercenary Madonna', review of Tim McGirk, *Wicked Lady: Salvador Dalí's Muse*, in the *Times Literary Supplement.*
August 4th-10th: 'Tasteful snatchings', review of Leonora Carrington, *The House of Fear: Notes from down below*, and *The Seventh Horse and Other Tales* in the *Times Literary Supplement.*
September: gave poetry reading with George Barker in King's Lynn.
November 3rd: publication of ***Miserere- poèmes 1937-1942***, translated into French (Paris: Granit).

1990-2001. During the next decade, he had a serious fall breaking his pelvis, from which he recovered; but eyesight failing, deafness increasing, suffering from diabetes and diverticulitis, his frail, stooping, but impressive figure became progressively less mobile. His son-in-law, Kevin, chauffeured him, with a wheelchair, to poetry readings in Cowes and over the water to Bath and London. He was visited by many friends, critics, broadcasters, academics, from home and abroad, who admired the fortitude with which he faced various serious ailments.
Stephen Stuart-Smith, Alan Clodd's successor at the Enitharmon Press, embarked on a major project that saw the publication of several works (some recovered from limbo).

1990
Invited to Madrid by British Council.
Spring: review of 2 books on trees in *Poetry Review*, the green issue (Vol.80, no.1).

October: DG unveiled memorial in Madrid's Residencia de Estudiantes to the 5 British writers who dies in the Spanish civil war,
November 10th: DG's obituary for Lawrence Durrell appeared in *The Independent.*

1991
'The Sun', a translation of a poem by Georg Trakl in *A Garland for Stephen Spender* (Tragara Press).
Publication of ***Collected Journals 1936-42*** (Skoob Books), including first publication in English of *Wartime Journal 1940—1942.*
March 8th: 'Loplop and his aviary: the Surrealist visions of Max Ernst and Man Ray', review of *Man Ray: the Bazaar Years* (exhibition at the Barbican Art Gallery) and *Max Ernst* (Tate Gallery) in the *Times Literary Supplement.*
August 23rd: 'Alchemist of the spirit: Breton's esoteric treasure hunt', review of four Breton publications: *La Nouvelle Revue Française–Avril 1967: André Breton 1896-1966, Hommages, Témoinages, L'Oeuvre*; André Breton, *Je vois, j'imagine: poèmes-objets*; *André Breton, la beauté convulsive*; André Breton & Gérard Legrand, *L'Art magique: Une histoire de l'art*, in the *Times Literary Supplement.*
October 29th: DG's obituary for George Barker published in *The Independent.*
November 1st: another obituary for Barker by DG published in *The Tablet.* These two items, together with the memoir 'George Barker at Seventy' (*PN Review* 31, 1983) were included in *George Barker & David Gascoyne: **The Fire of Vision***, edited by Roger Scott in 1996.
November 19th: DG's obituary for Eileen Agar published in *The Independent.*

1992
Publication of ***Exploration*** translated by Michèle Duclos (Bordeaux: Editions Dufourg-Tandrup), including 'Death of an Explorer'/*Mort d'un Explorateur* and 'Self-Discharged'/*Quitus* with preface by Duclos.
Introduction by DG to *Elizabeth Smart – The Collected Poems* (Paladin).
February: *Poèmes français:* 'Eau sifflée' and 'Arbres, Bêtes, Courants d'eau: Improvisation (pour Salah Stétié)' in *Poésie 92*, No.41, 'La poésie entre les langues'.
Spring: 'David Gascoyne in Interview' with Lucien Jenkins in *Stand*, Vol.33, no.2.
August: participated in the *Poetas del Mundo* Course at Madrid's Universidad Complutense, with 'Adonis', a Syrian refugee from Lebanon now established in Paris: 'one of the great poets of our time'. DG read with Irish poet John Liddy. Met Louis Bourne, American poet. Ernesto Cardenal 'the star of the end of the Course'.

1993
Publication of *Lawrence Durrell* (Tragara Press for Enitharmon).
Summer: 'Balthus' from the French of Paul Eluard in *Illuminations.*
November 19th: James Roose-Evans gave a reading of ***Night Thoughts*** at the Temenos Academy, 14 Gloucester Gate, London. A cassette recording was made.

1994
Still suffering from prostate problems, and now had tinnitus.
Made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and invited to a reception on **June 16th** at the headquarters in Hyde Park Gardens.
Publication of ***Three Remanences*** (Tragara Press for Enitharmon).
Selected Poems published (Enitharmon Press), with an introduction by DG.
December 6th: slipped and fell at home and broke his pelvis. Found on floor an hour

later by Judy who had been out broadcasting to the hospital.

1995
Poetry reading at the Royal Albert Hall filmed by Chris Petit.
January 28th: BBC Radio 4 Kaleidoscope feature, *A Burning Sound* – the life and work of DG profiled by Sean Street, with contributions from Philip Marsh, Kathleen Raine, Jeremy Reed and Christine Jordis.
October 10th: 'Ivy' first published in *The Independent* to mark DG's 79th birthday.
October 25th: DG's obituary for Gavin Ewart published in *The Independent*.

1996
Presented in London by the French Minister of Culture with the prestigious award of Chevalier dans l'Ordre National des Arts et Lettres in recognition of his services to literature and art in France.
7 poems selected by Jeremy Reed in the anthology *Conductors of Chaos*, edited by Iain Sinclair (Picador).
Publication of *George Barker & David Gascoyne*: ***The Fire Of Vision***, edited and with an introductory essay by Roger Scott (Tragara Press for Enitharmon).
The Present Greatness of Mozart, translation of the essay by Pierre Jean Jouve (Delos Press, Birmingham), first published in *Horizon*, Vol.1, no.2 in **1940**.
January 25th: 'An Unfinished Post-Auden Pre-War Proem', from a notebook **c.1937**, first published in *London Review of Books* with 'Notebook, New Year 1991'.
Spring: 3 poems, 'Goût du Jour', 'Cafard', 'Récupération' from **c.1936** notebooks, first published in *Poetry Review*, Vol.86, no.1.
September: Radio 4 Kaleidoscope feature: Sean Street talking to DG about the art of translating verse in *The Cartographer of Thought*.
October: publication of ***Selected Verse Translations*** edited by Robin Skelton & Alan Clodd with an introduction by Roger Scott (Enitharmon Press).

1997
Maggie O'Sullivan, David Gascoyne, Barry MacSweeney: a selection of uncollected and unpublished poems, edited by Roger Scott with Nicholas Johnson, in *etruscan reader III* (etruscan books). Second expanded edition with additional poems (first publication **1996**).
3 poems, 'The Fabulous Glass', 'Orpheus in the Underworld', 'Half-an-hour', in *Beyond Bedlam*, edited by Ken Smith & Matthew Sweeney.
February 23rd: DG gave a poetry reading at the Bath Literature Festival.

1998
Spring: a selection of poems from ***Encounter With Silence*** first published, with an introduction by Roger Scott, in *Temenos Academy Review*.
May 15th: gave a poetry reading with Aidan Dun at the Quay Arts Centre, Cowes.
May 19th: Sean Street from the BBC recorded DG reading the 'lost' poem from his 1930s Surrealist film scenario, now called *Procession to the Private Sector*, (to be published later in the year in ***Selected Prose 1934-1996***)
June 13th: *Procession to the Private Sector* adapted for radio, with Simon Callow as The Camera, transmitted on Radio 4 in the 'Between the Ears' series.
October: publication of ***Selected Prose 1934-1996*** (ed.) with a preface by Roger Scott, and an introduction by Kathleen Raine.
Publication of ***Encounter With Silence: Poems 1950*** (ed.) with an introduction by Roger

Scott who found the unpublished poems in a notebook in the Berg Collection in New York Public Library, the previous March.
November 29th: Iain Sinclair, poet, novelist, critic, chose ***Selected Prose 1934-1996*** as one of his books of the year in *The Independent on Sunday*.

2000
A new edition of ***A Short Survey of Surrealism*** (Enitharmon Press).
'Snow in Europe' and 'A Wartime Dawn' in *The New Penguin Book of English Verse*, edited by Paul Keegan.
Spring: translations of 2 poems by O.V. de L. Milosz in *Temenos Academy Review*, 4.
May 17th: DG and Judy celebrated their silver wedding anniversary.
October: publication from a 1937 notebook of ***April: a novella*** (ed.) at DG's request, and with an introductory essay by Roger Scott.

2001
October: pamphlet publication of unpublished poem from c.1936, *The Entrance to that Valley Stands Alone*, with a note by Roger Scott, (Enitharmon Press).
November: publication of ***Poems by David Gascoyne***. 16 selected by Judy Gascoyne (Greville Press Pamphlets, Warwick).
November 7th: after another fall, this time in his bedroom, DG was in a nursing home some 20 miles away. Two days later he had deteriorated.
November 19th: he was looking very much better and asking to go home. Arrangements were being made for his return, but he died on Sunday, November 25th after transfer to St. Mary's hospital in Cowes.
November 28th: obituaries by Sebastian Carter in *The Independent* and Roger Scott (unaccredited) in *The Times*.
November 27th: obituary by Valentine Cunningham in *The Guardian*, and obituary in *The Daily Telegraph* (anon.).
November 29th: obituary by Christine Jordis in *Le Monde* (Paris).
December 6th: funeral service at Northwood Parish Church, Cowes.

2002
January 8th: *A Burning Sound*, presented by Sean Street, first broadcast in 1995, repeated on BBC Radio 4 at 11.02 p.m. as a tribute to DG.
January 19th: obituary by Kathleen Raine in *The Tablet*.
January 26th: *Procession to the Private Sector* repeated on Radio 4.
March-April: 'David Gascoyne (1916-2001)', funeral address given by Stephen Stuart-Smith at Northwood Parish Church, Isle of Wight, on 6 December 2001, published in *PN Review 144*, Vol.28, no.4, pp.11-13.

Appendix 2: Plans for collections 1937-41 and drafts of poems

Appendix 2A

DAVID GASCOYNE

Mozart: 'Sursum Corda'

Draft in Notebook

Filters the sunlight from the knife-bright wound
And rarifies the {rumour / ~~image-laden~~ air}
The {all-receptive heart in pure hands held / ~~elevated~~}
Towards the sostenuto of the sky

{Supernal voices, flood the ear of clay, / ~~Angelic~~}
And {pierce through the dense skull! reveal / ~~break the crystal skull~~}
The immaterial world concealed
By mortal deafness and the screen of sense:

World of transparency and utmost flight,
And world within the world: beyond our speech
To tell what equinoxes of {the absolute / ~~unclouded space~~}
The spirit ranges in its long upwards release.

~~Filters the sunlight from the knife-bright wind~~
And catches all the colour of the air
~~And rarifies the rumour-burdened air~~
~~The all-receptive chalice of the heart upheld~~
~~Towards the sostenuto of the sky~~

Filters the sunlight from the knife-bright wind
And rarifies the rumour-burdened air
The heart's receptive chalice in pure hands upheld
Towards the sostenuto of the sky.

World of transparency and last release,
And world within the world: beyond our speech
To tell what equinoxes of the infinite
The spirit ranges in its utmost flight.

Published Version

Seven, No.4 Summer 1939, p.33.

For Priaulx Renier (sic)

Filters the sunlight from the knife-bright wind
And rarifies the rumour-burdened air
The heart's receptive chalice in pure hands upheld
Towards the sostenuto of the sky

Supernal voices, flood the ear of clay
And transpierce the dense skull: Reveal
The immaterial world concealed
By mortal deafness and the screen of sense

World of transparency and last release
And world within the world! Beyond our speech
To tell what equinoxes of the infinite
The spirit ranges in its rare utmost flight.

DAVID GASCOYNE

Epode

Draft in notebook: '*Prophetic Mouth*'

Then
The great face turned away in silence, slow,
Resigned and imperturbable, the brow
A grave dome drastic in its upthrust, and the eyes'
~~Unquenched grief~~
Intense blue flame of grief sealed and concealed
Within sepulchral sockets, ~~behind~~ underneath the ~~heavy~~ stone
downcast
~~Of~~ ~~monumental lids~~; ~~and as it turned~~
~~Immensely ominous the mouth revealed~~
The Whole
~~Whose meaning no~~ ~~man's mouth may ever speak~~
~~human~~
~~In the brief lightning~~
~~In the unending moment of its smile~~
Of their irrevocably downcast lids. It turned
Away; and as the trunk began to fall
Towards futurity the gulf of the unknown
To come, the ~~grim~~ mouth set in its midst revealed
The meaning of the Whole
(Which no man's mouth may ever speak)
~~In the unearthly flash of its triumph~~ During one
~~a single~~
~~During the timeless momentary flash~~ moment's timeless flash
In the unearthly triumph of its smile.

While the wrecked world's last bonfire turned to ash.
~~old~~

* * * * *

Published as *Epode* in *Poems 1937-1942* (1943)

Then
The great Face turned away in silence, veiled and slow,
Resigned and imperturbable: the brow
A grave dome drastic in its upthrust, and the eyes'
Unquenched blue fires of grief sealed and concealed
Beneath lids of irrevocable flint. It turned
Away; and as the shaft below began to slant
Towards its headlong fall into unknown
Futurity, the sacred Mouth enshrined
Like a sarcophagus within its midst revealed
During that moment's timeless flash
The wordless Meaning of the Whole
(Which may be spoken by no man)
Through the unearthly brilliance of its smile...

While the old world's last bonfires turned to ash.

Appendix 2B

Add.56041 *The Open Tomb*

World Without End
Inferno
Mountains
Lowland
To Benjamin Fondane

Legendary Fragment
The Fault
Eve
Venus Androgyne
Fortress
Insurrection
The Beast

Final Scene
- - - - - -
The Entombment

Kyrie
The Last Hour
De Profundis
Lachrymae
Ex Nihilo
Pieta
Concert of Angels
Mozart
Cavatina
Winter Garden
The Wall
The Open Tomb
Misericord.

Add.62947 Poems excluded from *The Open Tomb* (p.52)

Requiem Hymn (for solo voice and choir)
Gloria Mundi

Post-Mortem
The Hero
The Nameless Souls
Dead Poet
} Originally from Cortège and Hymn of Death'
Death and Eros
Signs

Appendix 2C

World Without End (‘*The Open Tomb*’)

1. ‘See how across the seas...’ (Later: ‘World Without End’)
2. Inferno
3. Lowland
4. Mountains
5. ‘This is the osseous and uncertain desert...’ (Later: ‘I.M. Benjamin Fondane’)
6. Lachrymae
7. Kyrie
8. De Profundis
9. Ex Nihilo
10. Insurrection
11. Legendary Fragment
12. The Fault
13. Eve
14. Venus Androgyne
15. ~~Woman and Earth~~
16. Death and Eros Fortress
17. ~~After long thirst for sky...~~ Gloria Mundi
18. ~~Gloria Mundi~~ Cavatina
19. Mozart: Sursum Corda
20. Concert of Angels

Appendix 2D

Add.62947 *The Conquest of Defeat - Poems 1939-40*

I Dedicatory and Commemorative Poems (15)

Lives of the Poets
The Plummet Heart (Hart Crane)
The Urn (P.J. Jouve)
Ode to Rimbaud
To George Barker (September 1st)
Poetry's Evidence (to Paul Eluard)
To Antonia White
Elegy for Léon Chestov
To the Young Poets of America Letter to Jean le Louët
Lines for Stephen Spender
An Epistle to All

II Personal and Confessional Poems (20)

Paris Remembered (inc.)
In 1937
A November Night
Chambre d'Hôtel
Fête in February
Jardin du Palais Royal
Les Noctambules
Epilogue 1940
Apologia
Dead End
The Writer's Hand
To a Contemporary
Odeur de Pensée
Dichotomy
Inside the Whale
Three Poems of Childhood
The Projections of Desire
The Fabulous Glass
Sotto Voce
My Road is Flight!
Destination
Epilogue to an Episode

III Poems on Contemporary and General Themes (15)

Snow in Europe
An Autumn Park
Spring MCMXL
Apocalyptic Ode
Farewell Chorus
A Wartime Dawn
Walking at Whitsun
Barcelona 1936-39
Zero
'Wozzeck' Act III, Scenes 4-5
Tobias
The Conquest of Defeat

Add.62947 *Pieta* (or '*World Without End*')

1. **Elegiac Stanzas** (in memory of Alban Berg)

2. **Hölderlin's Madness**

    Figure in a Landscape
    Orpheus in the Underworld
    Tenebrae
    Epilogue

3. **Cortège of Death**

    Final Scene
    The Nameless Souls
    The Hero
    The Poet
    The Choir
    The Whore
    The Criminal
    The Bride
    Warriors, Judges, Priests
    Children
    Pieta

4. **Hymn**

Add.62947 *World Without End* (p.52)

Mozart: Sursum Coda (sic)
Lowland
Kyrie — De Profundis
Woman and Earth
(The Crystal Skull) The Fault
~~Avenging Angel~~ — ~~Peace~~
Eve — Cavatina
Signs
Venus Androgyne
Death & Eros
~~after a long thirst for sky~~
Lachrymae
Gloria Mundi *
Concert of Angels (Grünewald)
'This is the osseous and uncertain desert'
Inferno
Mountains
'The poet sings ...'

'Gloria Mundi' p.52

1. Mountains
2. Oceans
3. Continents
4. Man
5. The Hidden Powers
6. Gloria Mundi

Appendix 2E

Add.56043 Projected Poems June 1940

Paris

~~Chambre d'hôtel~~
In 1937
November Night } Epilogue (June 1940)
Noctambules

The Cavernous Wound
Dichotomy
The Poet in Wartime
The Anchorite
Sotto Voce
A Simple Time
In a Room

The Great Day
The Nameless Powers
Destination
An Epistle to All
Daily Life
(The Lock)
(Early Morning, St. James' Park
Apocalyptic Ode

Address to the Young Poets of America
Lines to Stephen Spender
Letter to Jean Le Louët
Vigil (Before the Invasion)
In the Belly of the Whale (to replace Cavernous Wound)
(The Death of Mithridate)
My Road is Flight
Soma
To Rimbaud (Ode)
Elegy for Léon Chestov (Vox Clamantis in Deserto)

Add.56045 MISCELLANEOUS NOTES / 1940 (p.62)

Seven Paris Poems (Suite)

1. In 1937
2. A November Night
3. Chambre d'Hôtel
4. Fête in February
5. Au Jardin du Palais Royal
6. Noctambules
7. Epilogue (June 1940)

Sonnets

Humilis (on Hölderlin)
I.M. Baudelaire
The Sacred Fire (or: The Hearth) [for Barker]
The Tropics (to Henry Miller)
L'Evidence Poétique (to Eluard)

Three Myths:

I Onan
II Narcissus
III Janus

Add.56046 POEMS: SPRING-SUMMER, 1941 (p.2)

Poems, 1941

The Uncertain Battle
Oxford: A Spring Day
The Dark's Fidelity
The Anchorite
The Gravel-Pit Field
Noctambules (No.6 of 'Reminiscences of Paris)
Sonnet (Dichterleben) No.1
The Death of Léon Chestov
Lines ('So much to tell: so measurelessly more')

Suggested Tiles for Projected Poems:

The Death of Léon Chestov
'Dichterleben'
On the Eve (Before Easter - Fantasy)
A Meditation Before Man's Nakedness
Elegy (In Memoriam R.R.)
To an Anonymous Shade
Spiritus Mundi
Flammantia Moenia

Appendix 2F

Add.56046 Poems: Spring/Summer 1941

DAVID GASCOYNE
Dark's Fidelity
Unpublished

While manhood's fire still burns the blood
And quickens with unspent desire my breath
There come to share the shadows of my bed
Many a slim sweet girl and sleek-limbed youth;
Though never next day by my side
Remains even a wraith.

But when they come no more, I'll turn
Gratefully to the dark's great emptiness
And sink, clasped in Night's arms, more deeply than
or young man's kiss;
Nor shall I wish to rise again
From that timeless embrace.

DAVID GASCOYNE

Three Stars

Draft in Notebook

1 The night was Time
2 The phases of the Moon
3 Dynamic influence, controller of the tides,
4 Its changing face { and cycle of quick shades,
the
5 Were History, { ~~Night seemed unending~~ then
~~our movement and direction~~
6 Arrived the prophesied and the to be
7 Recounted hour when **** the reflection ceased
8 To flow { broken
like unseen blood ^ in between
9 The dark's tenebral mirror and the lunar light,
10 Exchanging meaning. Anguish like a crack
11 Ran with its ruin ~~through~~ from the filled-up Past
12 Towards the Future's emptiness; and Black,
13 { Consumed}
Cancelled} light's prism ^ and became ^ an absolute.
~~Engulfing}~~

1 Black was the No-time at the heart
2 Of Time, the ****** frameless mirror's back.
3 But still the Anguish shook
4 As though with memory and with anticipation: till

5 ****** Its ^ fearful trembling broke
6 { An unhoped-for miracle} Negation's spell
Miraculously
7 { Death died { Birth was born with one great cry,
Birth death
8 And out of some uncharted spaceless sky
9 Into the new-born **** night three white stars fell.

Published as *Three Stars: A Prophecy*
In Poems 1937-42

DAVID GASCOYNE
Ex Nihilo

***Draft from notebook*:**

~~Here am I now cast down~~
~~Beneath the eyeless glare of the dead suns~~
~~Which~~
~~Beneath the black glare of this netherworld's~~
~~Dead suns~~

Here am I now cast down
Beneath the black glare of a netherworld's
Dead suns, dust in my heart; among
Dun tiers no tiers refresh am cast
Down by a hand:

Hand that I love! Lord Light,
How dark is Thy arm's will and ironlike
Thy ruler's finger that has sent me here!
Far from Thy face, I nothing understand
But kiss the Hand that has consigned

Me { to this latter world
~~to a place~~ where I must learn
****
The revelation of despair and find
Among the debris of (~~this latter world~~) all certainties
The hardest stone on which to found
Altar and shelter for Eternity.

Here am I now cast down
Among the hopeless dust of fractured
Plinths, - shrine desecrated, glory trash
The will incurable: am cast
Down by a violent hand:

Here am I now cast down
Among fractured
Plinths,

Down by a ruthless hand

Here am I now cast down
Beneath the arid eyeless glare of ashen
Suns, choked with dry darkness, in the tiers

***First published* in:**
Poetry (London), No.2, April 1939

Here am I now cast down
Beneath the black glare of a netherworld's
Dead suns, dust in my heart; among
Dun tiers no tears refresh am cast
Down by a lofty hand:

Hand that I love! Lord Light
How dark is Thy arm's will and ironlike
Thy ruler's finger that has sent me here!
Far from Thy face, I nothing understand
But kiss the Hand that has consigned

Me to this latter world where I must learn
The revelation of despair
Among the debris of all certainties
The hardest stone on which to found
Altar and shelter for Eternity.

The version above was published in:
Poems 1937-42
with minor changes:

line 3: Dead suns, dust in my **mouth,** among
line 4: Dun tiers no tears refresh**;**
line 5: Down by a lofty hand**,**
line 6: Hand that I love! Lord Light**,**
line 7: How dark is thy arm's will [misprint?]
line 11: Me to **these** latter **years**
line 12: The revelation of despair**, and find**

Appendix 2G

Add.56041/ 56043 ***Elegiac Stanzas in Memory of Alban Berg***
First draft, British Library

1

When a rich (sick) rose falls in flakes from its thorn-spiked stem
Its petals stain the dark eroded soil;
So tears fall heavily to stain the heart's stone floor
A grief akin to madness sets its sudden springs
To leap without a cause from out our sleep
Our (jarring) nervous dreams
Until we shake with sorrow that we cannot name.

The rain with turbid drops adorns the leaves
Of rose-bushes that grow among the rocks
And stifle with their scent the chilly air.
It is the hour when disembodied heads,
The faces of the lost, glide, pensively
Across (Along/Among) the misty twilight (shadows) of this distant place, -
Cimmeria, the refuge of the shades.

On high
Striations of white light amaze the sky;
While round the staring lead-eyed pool below
A dull wind stirs the agony of reeds
Concentric ripples strike the water's rim
Like echoes of a desperate final cry,
And (While) arrow-headed birds fly fast away.

11

The snake-like roads that writhe across the plains
The agonized cities and towns
The valleys of melting snow
And the cruel mountain heights
By day lie exposed to the blows of the sun
Are oppressed under darkness by night
And have never repose

Or monotonous colourless skies
Weigh down the appalling /dreadful streets
Where human misery seems too great to bear -
Thugs trained to beat the poor to death
Neurotics groping in distress; -
Or fear-distended eyes through windows see
The glare of gasworks bursting on the outskirts of the town.
Lying tired and silent in a darkened room

One hears the trains rush by across the viaduct
Raucously hastening to attain the heart of Europe
And one lies wondering:
Where can all the trains be going?
Why is it all the trains are crashing
In my head?

111

[Dream, desire, death, all told,
The present's pain,
Centreless, all-pervading,
Drowns in its daft white glare
The dissolving world retracts
Its image from our eyes]

The world dissolves, retracts
Its image from the eye's
Dissolving glare. The present's pain
(Dream, desire, death all told)
Centreless, (ever-present) pervading all,
Drowns in its daft white glare
The mind as music drowns

Us, listening on the ... verge
Of virgin silence, that last
Comfort of the battered, and it seems
Its sense is stronger than the eye's;
No words, no passionate description
Can move us more than these:
'*Les sons d'une musique enervante et calme.*

Semblable au cri lontain de l'humaine douleur,'
Too complicated to explain,
Too like a wound (cruelly true) to bear for long
Before the wind rises again at last.
Blowing the hair back from our heads,
And snatching away the music in our ears
To lose it in the vast sky's sombre waste

[*The stanza below is written on a separate page under the heading* **1V**]

[A man's life now, like the wind
That passes, the winds above us,
No longer fixed nor separate in itself
But with all the others merging,
As where a lonely column melts
Into the distance and the breast of doves
Are seen a moment as they cross the brow,]

Elegiac Stanzas **1V**

As the wind strikes light from the sides
Of waves and silver from their crests

Though of no Southern Ocean but the couch
Of gloom and icebergs, as the wind
[That passes in its passing wrests
(A transitory smile) from (the) rock
Grinds one more grain of sand
From rock]
That passes in its passing wrests
A transitory smile from utter rock
And stirs the sleep of sand,
As where a single column melts
Into the distance and the wings (breasts) of doves
Whirl for a moment past the gazer's eyes,
As smoke climbs up behind a hill
To tell of towns or tents beyond,
And as these vaguer images
Merge one by one into a waking dream,

A man's life passes, is not fixed or one,
But is not substanceless as (things)
In all the loud apocalypse of time,
One man or millions, (each is set)
from which no-one escapes
The place and date. Man's present state
How fearful, and how real.

V

A sombre script in half-light read
Text of an ancient or some sage
Transfigured by a sudden inward ray
That floods the meditative page
Instructs the bewildered heart:
Death is not only death nor yet
Shall life prevail if death should die

Whose is the memory we mourn?
But countless memories, innumerable stones,
Each spark that the dark defeated
And at last shall kindle in a blinding
Blaze, make mourning seem
A child's misapprehending weakness, when
Flame leaps from the very urn.

An ancient text - but we do not look back
But forward out of meditation rear
A dustless and determined clear
Inscription like a fervent pointing hand:
We lived this time and saw
Ruin and death at work on every side -
We also saw your light who burn/shine ahead
(But never doubted)

* * * * *

Elegiac Stanzas in Memory of Alban Berg
Second draft, in the Berg Collection, New York Public Library

1

When a rich rose falls in flakes from a thorn-spiked stem
Its petals stain the dark eroded soil;
So tears fall heavily to stain the heart's stone floor.
A grief near madness sets its sudden springs
To leap without a cause from out our sleep,
Our jarring nervous dreams,
Until we shake with sorrow that we cannot name.
The rain with turbid drops adorns the leaves
Of rose-bushes that grow among the rocks
And stifle with their scent the chilly air.
It is the hour when disembodied heads,
The faces of the lost, glide pensively
Across the twilight of this distant place, -
Cimmeria, the refuge of the shades.

On high
Striations of white light amaze the sky;
While round the staring lead-eyed pool below
A dull wind stirs the agony of reeds,
Concentric ripples strike the water's rim
Like echoes of a desperate final cry;
And arrow-headed birds fly fast away.

11

The roads that writhe across the plains
The harrowed upland fields
The valleys of melting snow
And the cruel mountain heights
By day lie exposed to the blows of the sun
Are oppressed under darkness by night
And have never repose

Our monotonous colourless skies
Weigh down the appalling streets
Where human misery seems too great to bear:
Thugs trained to beat the poor to death
Neurotics gasping in distress
Or fear-distended eyes through windows see
The glare of gasworks bursting on the outskirts of the town.

Lying tired and silent in a darkened room
One hears the trains rush by across the viaduct
Raucously hastening to attain the heart of Europe;
And one lies wondering:
Where can all the trains be going?
Why is it all the trains are crashing
In my head?

111

The dying light falls helpless on our hands:
This was our sun that dies, this light
That warmed our hearts now drowns
In requiem tears. Our son
Who died, had warm blood in his heart;
He had proud hands, a prince's head.
And love lived in his eyes.

The tender brightness of an early day,
The unexpressed, its unpossessed
And unattainable sharp joy
Lost in a remote and half-forgotten past
Still lives again at moments, still returns
With messages of half-remembered hope,
Recaptured in a net of short-lived sound.

Too complicated to explain,
Too sweetly unbelievable to last
Before the rising of the wind again
Blowing the hair back from our heads,
Shaking the last leaves from the tree
And snatching away the music from our ears
To lose it in the vast sky's distant waste.

Signed typescript (n.d.) [*This second version, ends here.*]

The first publication of the elegy, in French in five sections, ***Strophes Elégiaques à la mémoire d'Alban Berg***, appeared in *Cahiers du Sud* 19, no.220 (January 1940), pp.49-52.

Appendix 2H

DAVID GASCOYNE

Yes, You!

Unpublished

Stealthy and utterly vain, insane
small nagging voice,
You go on and on, and on, repeating
your wretched obstinate
unforgivable lies,
Your impotent, impudent accusations,
Your little nastinesses and
your filthy imaginings,
On, and on, and on,
Dogged enemy of all truth, and
beauty, and courage of the mind,
and honesty, and the will to
change, and the power to love,
You go on and on with your
stealthy whispering and your
guilty, prudent repetition,
Because you are the contemptible
powerless victim
Of a blind raging power by
which you are possessed,
And you go on and on because you
could not even if you would, know
how to stop,
And perhaps in reality, you are
not utterly guilty in the end,
Because you are quite unconscious
of what you are doing, of what
you keep having to say
Over and over and over again,
And quite unconscious of whose
victim it is you are.
Be assured that the silence which
Preceded and follows you is overwhelmingly
vast and deep and just.

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